

The Struggle For Freedom In The Bahamas



**Vanguard Nationalist
and Socialist Party
of the Bahamas**

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PREFACE

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The Vanguard Nationalist and Socialist Party of the Bahamas is pleased to offer this analysis of the political and economic situation in the Bahamas. We hope that it will be read and studied not only by the Bahamian people, but by all the peoples of the world who love justice and freedom.

The Vanguard Party is the only true representative of the interests and aspirations of the oppressed masses of the Bahamas. Only the Vanguard is committed to an uncompromising struggle to bring an end to imperialist and neocolonial domination and to place the resources of our country in the hands of those whose labour has built it. Only the Vanguard Party is fighting for an end to class rule and for the establishment of a genuine workers' democracy.

For more than a dozen years, our country has been in the grip of a neocolonial clique, led by the charlatan Lynden Pindling and his Progressive Liberal Party. By promising liberation from colonial control and the domination of the despised Bay Street merchants, the PLP was able to tap the deepest yearnings of the masses for freedom and economic development. But Pindling and his party have betrayed the confidence of the people. They have used the power given them by the masses to become multimillionaires and to consolidate power in their own hands. Today our country is even more a pawn of imperialism than it was before the PLP took power.

Bribery, corruption and political venality are the hallmarks of the present regime. And the "official" opposition is not only hopelessly weak, but is a corrupt, inept puppet of the merchant minority, so that it offers no real alternative. Meanwhile, the masses have fallen deeper into poverty, misery, squalor and hopelessness than ever before.

Progress and hope for the Bahamas depend upon removing this neocolonial regime by throwing imperialist domination from our backs and standing up as a proud and independent people. There must be an end to the parasitic economy of the tourism developers and the building of a balanced socialist economy which can stop runaway unemployment and use the resources of our country to meet the human needs of our people. And there must be an end to the political domination of a small elite and the building of new structures of power controlled by the masses.

In a crude attempt to preserve his crumbling image, Pindling has recently proclaimed what he calls a "social revolution." It is indeed significant that Pindling and his gang now feel compelled to respond to the aspirations of the people by at least adopting the language of revolutionary change. But it is also important to understand that there is absolutely no hope that this "social revolution" will turn out to be anything more than rhetoric. As our analysis will show, no party can serve both the masses and those who exploit and oppress the masses. And as the analysis will also show, the PLP is totally committed to

maintaining a system that serves the exploiters. For such a party to deceive the people with talk of "social revolution" is nothing short of criminal.

Nonetheless, a genuine social revolution is precisely what we must have in the Bahamas. And this small book is designed to aid that revolution. Its purpose is to clarify the present condition of the Bahamas, to place it in historical perspective, and to provide general direction for the ongoing struggle. Chapter One provides a brief historical overview of the political development which has resulted in the present neocolonial situation. In Chapter Two we survey the economic scene, contrasting the propaganda about national development with the reality of increasing underdevelopment. Chapter Three offers a general account of prospects for the future and demonstrates the need for genuine revolutionary change. And finally, Chapter Four discusses in general terms the development of the Vanguard Party, followed by a discussion of the Vanguard platform, based on the Party's Ten Point Program for national construction and development.

The Vanguard Party is a party of struggle, a party of honesty, a scientific party, a revolutionary party. We seek and welcome all honest expressions of opinion and criticism. We invite both the Bahamian people and readers around the world to give us the benefit of their criticisms and comments. Our struggle is part and parcel of a world struggle against imperialism, colonialism and neocolonialism. Here in the Caribbean especially, that struggle is becoming more intense with every passing day. To all comrades in this struggle, wherever they are, we offer this analysis for their information and we seek their comments and support.

The Chairman of the Vanguard Party, Comrade John McCartney, has expressed well our common attitude:

We the Vanguards have scorned the beds of ivory and the trinkets of gold. Instead we are prepared to struggle and die for the people. But we do not consider ourselves giants or anything. We are simple people who feel that our children must have jobs in their own country. We are simple people who want to have some say other than at election time as to how our community is run. We do not think that a few in a corrupt party should dominate the fate of hundreds and thousands of people. We are simple people who realize that a person only lives once, and even if you lived for an hour, you should live it as a man or woman with all possibilities open to you. The test of a good life is not measured in how many years you live, which is a biological thing, but in the greatness of the cause that you lived for. What is the best life? Drawing a salary, living and dying? Or trying to make the conditions better in the society of which you are a part?

To all those who share our struggle, we offer this analysis. And to the great Bahamian people, who have suffered so long and who share our vision, this book is dedicated.

*Nassau,
May, 1980*

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Chapter 1

Neocolonialism in the Bahamas

Let us begin by stating the most fundamental truth about our situation. The Bahamas today is controlled by a government that is purely and simply a neocolonial puppet of foreign investors and the chief imperialist powers of the Western world. This is the plain fact. It is the reason our people remain poor and oppressed.

The destruction of neocolonialism is the most pressing goal of our struggle, because it is the only hope for the liberation of our country and our people. Therefore, the first step in our analysis must be to explain what neocolonialism is and how it has become established in the Bahamas.

We remember that in 1967, the Progressive Liberal Party (PLP) told us that we had a "quiet revolution" and that we had been "liberated" from the oppression of the Bay Street merchants and their party, the United Bahamian Party (UBP). They promised that no longer would a few rich men run the country, while the majority of black and white Bahamians had no voice in public affairs. We remember well all the talk about "Black Power" and "majority rule."

But after twelve years, none of the promises of the PLP has been fulfilled. The country is still run by the same rich man's club, although a few black faces have been added to the club. And the masses of people are still being crushed and exploited to fill the pockets of the ruling class and their foreign investor friends.

We also remember that since 1973, the Bahamas is no longer a British colony and is supposedly an "independent" nation. We now have our own flag, our own Parliament and our own courts. The Bahamas has its seat in the United Nations, and it is recognized by the international community and by international law as an independent nation.

But in a more fundamental sense, the Bahamas remains a dependent country under the effective control of outside forces. Foreign investors, international bankers and mafia gamblers have a lot more to say about what goes on in our country than do the people themselves. The Pindling government has done nothing more than carry out the plan of Stafford Sands and the Bay Street Boys to build a parasitic economy in which a few could get rich, while many get poorer.

Kwame Nkrumah, the father of African liberation, tells us: "It is a common experience that wherever there is economic dependence, there is no freedom." It is nonsense to speak of independence or liberation apart from economic independence. Political freedom has little meaning so long as there is economic bondage. And the leaders of the PLP have made themselves multimillionaires precisely by offering us

political "independence" while leaving us poor and dependent economically. Until the masses control the economy of the Bahamas, we will also have little real political control of our country. So long as a small ruling class controls economic life, the masses will be oppressed. And nothing is changed by adding a few black oppressors to the ruling class. An oppressor is an oppressor, whether he is white, black or speckled.

This is the reality of neocolonialism in the Bahamas today. It means a form of independence that is really only a new form of dependence. And it means that while we have more black faces in the House of Assembly, they are no more than representatives of the same ruling class that has exploited our people for so long.

In this chapter, we discuss neocolonialism in a concrete way. First, we examine neocolonialism as a world phenomenon in recent history. Then we look at the way in which neocolonialism was established in the Bahamas over a period of thirty years.

A. General Introduction to Neocolonialism

Neocolonialism is the last and most dangerous form of *imperialism*. And imperialism is itself the last and most dangerous stage of the social and economic system of *capitalism*.

A capitalist economic system is one in which the means of production (factories, mines, banks, hotels, transportation systems, etc.) are owned by a small class of capitalists. The rest of the people are forced to work for the capitalists in order to survive. A small part of what the workers produce is returned to them in the form of wages. But a large part of their production is kept by the capitalist as his profit.

The capitalist hires workers and enters into production for just one reason—to make a profit. And if he does not think he can earn as much profit as he wants, he will simply stop production and leave the workers unemployed. Thus the purpose of a capitalist system is not to provide jobs or to meet the needs of people. The purpose is purely and simply to make as much profit as possible. The capitalist who fails to keep his profits growing will be quickly wiped out in competition with other capitalists.

Capitalism must constantly *expand* and find *new sources of profit*. And once the capitalists of a country become powerful enough, they find that they can increase their profits by exploiting not only the workers of their own country, but the people of other countries as well. When this happens, capitalism bursts out of national boundaries and begins to plunder the whole world. It is this plunder in all its forms that we call *imperialism*.

Imperialism has passed through two distinct phases. Beginning in the fifteenth century and continuing through the nineteenth, there was the stage of conquest and *direct colonialism*. North and South America were invaded, their inhabitants were either slaughtered or enslaved, and

their natural wealth was looted and returned to the "mother" countries of England, France, Spain, Portugal, the Netherlands, etc. In our own area, Columbus "discovered" the islands of the Caribbean, and soon the Arawaks and Caribs were almost extinct, replaced by English buccaners and Spanish *conquistadores*.

Having depleted the local population, the imperialists went looking for cheap labour, and they found it in Africa. Telling themselves that black people were "naturally inferior," they raided the nations of West Africa, bribed corrupt rulers, and dragged millions of Africans into slavery. Eventually Africa itself was colonized and rewarded with the blessings of Christian civilization. And much the same fate befell most of Asia as well. By the nineteenth century, a few small nations of Western Europe dominated the peoples of most of the world. The world was reshaped into a giant plantation, worked by the masses from whom it had been stolen.

In the twentieth century, imperialism entered a new phase. Two world wars altered the balance of forces in the imperialist world. Spurred on by the October Revolution in Russia and by the victory of the Chinese people thirty years later, oppressed people were roused to action. National liberation movements sprung up in colony after colony. By this time, the United States was becoming the dominant capitalist power, and since it had few colonies itself, the U.S. encouraged the process of decolonization as a way of opening up the world to its own economic penetration.

This process has continued unabated until, today, direct colonialism is no longer the main form of imperialism. Over much of the world, colonial governors have packed their bags and gone home. Newly independent nations have sprung up like mushrooms and now fill the underdeveloped world.

The old imperialists did not give up their colonies easily. Movements for national liberation were met with brutal repression, and some colonies, such as the Portuguese colonies of Angola, Mozambique and Guinea-Bissau, won their independence only after protracted wars of liberation. But as it became apparent that the determination to be free cannot be crushed, the imperialists began to cast about for a new strategy.

The problem the imperialists faced was how to keep control of the economy of the former colonies while granting formal political independence. The goal was to protect imperialist property and investments in the former colony, keep the door open to trade and exploitation, and yet make it appear that independence had been won. The strategy adopted to meet the purpose was *neocolonialism*.

The first step in creating a neocolonial situation is for the colonial power to select a small number of "natives" to be shaped and moulded in the image of their colonial masters. Using special schools and examinations, a few young people are picked out and given a careful education, usually in the "mother" country or some other imperialist

country. They are then sent back home, where they are given high-paying jobs and a role in colonial administration. Once this "native" elite is developed and put in place, the colony can be offered national independence as a "gift," and the elite assumes control of the government of the new nation. These new politicians and professionals have been cut off from their roots in the masses. They are given special treatment, and they often become wealthy themselves. Therefore, they are happy to help out with imperialist domination of their own country. They see to it that real economic power remains in the hands of foreign investors and that the economic interests of the imperialist powers are protected and preserved. They open the country up to investment, and place the resources of the country at the disposal of outside interests. And they see to it that wages are kept low, so that they turn their own people into a pool of cheap labor to be exploited by foreign investors. Finally, they see to it that the new nation remains politically and militarily allied with the imperialist powers. So in this way, the colonial power is able to grant formal independence and yet still keep economic and political power, by means of the local puppets it has created and installed.

What we have in the Bahamas is just such a neocolonial situation. The Bahamas has received its own "tea party" independence, it has its own flag and its own government. But the country is run by a clique of lawyers and businessmen who work right along with the old Bay Street merchants and foreign investors. Most of these new politicians were trained in Britain or the United States, and they help American and British investors keep control of the major resources and productive facilities of the islands. Investors operate in complete secrecy, with no government regulation and no taxation. As a result, most of the wealth of our country still ends up in the imperialist countries, and what little remains here is controlled by a small ruling class that serves imperialist interests. In the words of James Millette, the government is no more than a buffer to protect investors from the people.² Government leaders are for sale to the highest bidder, and one U.S. gambling operator remarked that corruption and bribery is "the way things are done down here."

But what is happening to the masses while dollars are flowing into the pockets of Wallace Groves, "Pop" Symonette, L. O. Pindling, Arthur Hanna, and the rest? Here the picture is different. The people have been uprooted from the land and crowded into the cities, especially the over-the-hill section of Nassau. Wages have risen little if any in the last decade, while the cost of living has skyrocketed. Many thousands can find no work at all, and among youth unemployment is almost universal. Young people without hope fall prey to dope, alcohol, and petty crime. Bahamian women are forced into prostitution, and even young men are forced to sell themselves to the perverted tastes of rich tourists. Schools are overcrowded and underequipped; housing is a disgrace to civilization; medical care is mediocre; the water supply is woefully in-

adequate; and social services are virtually non-existent. The political process is a joke, bribing voters with rum and t-shirts, and completely ignoring the people except at election time. The House of Assembly is a talk-shop filled with cheap hustlers looking for an easy dollar. The people are ignored and their needs are nobody's concern.

In the next chapter, we shall examine more closely the economic impact of neocolonial domination in our country. For the present, it will be worth taking a few pages to examine how this deplorable situation came about. What was the historical process by which neocolonialism was established in the Bahamas?

B. History of Neocolonialism in the Bahamas

The Bahamian people have never known any condition other than that of extreme poverty and exploitation. From the time of the first English colony in 1648, the land has been wastefully used up, and the masses have been shamelessly oppressed. Until 1833, more than two-thirds were chattel slaves and thousands more were technically "free" blacks, without property or political rights. After "emancipation," conditions were, if anything, worse than before. Although the people were now supposedly free, they were in fact denied civil rights, political participation, or access to public facilities. The Crown made no provision for employment of the former slaves, and Crown lands were given only to those with enough capital to develop them, thus again excluding all but a few wealthy planters.

The only option for the masses was to scratch out a living as subsistence farmers on the second-rate land. A few found occasional work on wrecking boats or in sponging or fishing. But with so much cheap labour available, wages were so low that most people lived at the edge of starvation. There was almost no education, and even as recently as 1957, only one child in sixty-seven got beyond primary school. In these conditions, without hope and without much change, the working people of the Bahamas lived for over a century after the end of slavery.

During these many years, a few families built up large fortunes and completely controlled the political life of the colony. Many were descended directly from the slave-owning families that had settled the islands in the 17th and 18th centuries. At first their wealth was based on plantation agriculture, but the plantation system did not long survive the end of slavery, mainly because the land was overworked and depleted by irrational methods. There were some later ventures in agriculture, especially in pineapple and sisal, but these efforts eventually failed also, because of both poor planning and foreign competition.

The great fortunes were thus based not so much on agriculture as on some more unsavory methods. Under capitalism, there is always a fine line between "legitimate" and "illegitimate" business. But in the Bahamas, the small ruling class erased that line altogether—they turned plunder and smuggling into big business.

They got started by running the blockade of southern ports during the U.S. Civil War of 1861-1865. Until about 1880, they added to their loot by scavenging and plundering ships wrecked in the dangerous waters around some of the islands. But the really big money was made between 1920 and 1933. During those years, the so-called Prohibition legislation in the U.S. created a bottomless market for bootleg whiskey. And the merchants of Bay Street became gentlemen of leisure by providing liquor for the rum-runners who smuggled it to thirsty Americans.

This was the kind of ruling class we inherited in this century. They were a narrow, uneducated lot, without wisdom and without scruples, conservative and racist in their attitudes. They controlled the colonial government, just as they controlled the economy, and they saw both as existing only to meet their private needs. Not a single progressive idea ever entered their heads, and they used their absolute power to keep the country backward and stagnant. These were the Bay Street Boys, and their names were Bethell, Christie, Kelly, Solomon, Sands, Symonette, et al.

Here is the way one historian sums up the situation prior to 1930:

The first two decades of the twentieth century saw the negro majority in the Bahamas bogged down in a mire of poverty and ignorance from which they could not extricate themselves. The minority of native whites, whom accidents of history and economics had placed in a position of eminence, seemed powerless to lead and doomed as a class by their narrowness and insularity.⁴

The modern history of the Bahamas really begins in the 1930s. In 1934 Sir Harry Oakes, a Canadian mining millionaire, came to the Bahamas and began developing the island of New Providence and its city of Nassau as a tourist attraction. His construction projects created new jobs, and workers began moving into Nassau in increasing numbers. With the coming of World War II, the Americans wanted to expand the airport at Oakes Field for military purposes, and this, together with other wartime construction, attracted still more workers to New Providence and Nassau. A working class of poor subsistence farmers was being transformed into an organized class of wage workers, still employed at only minimal wages.

As a matter of fact, one of the first signs of a new day dawning came on the Oakes Field construction project in 1942. The Americans were willing to pay Bahamian workers the same wage that they paid black American workers. Of course, this wage was still lower than that paid to white Americans, but it was much more than Bahamians had been receiving. However, the local government controlled by the Bay Street Boys refused to allow the higher wages, for fear that workers would become accustomed to better pay.

The workers reacted with outrage. On June 1, they gathered over-the-hill in Nassau and marched on Bay Street. For more than twenty-four hours, they battled police and military. In the end, there were two dead and twenty-five injured.

As a result of the uprising, wages were raised somewhat. But the real significance of this event was a new consciousness among workers of the power of an organized working class. They began to realize that by acting together, they could accomplish things. And neither was this lesson lost on the British colonial authorities. They realized that the working masses could no longer be ignored, and their attitudes began to change.

After the war, the Bay Streeters looked for ways to keep foreign dollars flowing into the country. Led by Stafford Sands, they linked up with U.S. and British investors to begin turning the Bahamas into a tax haven and tourism center for the elite of international capitalism. By 1960 Sands and his allies were well on the way to creating a "salubrious business climate" to go along with the natural "salubrious climate" celebrated by the travel book writers.⁵ By that time, an observer could remark that "catering for tax refugees has become the most lucrative Bahamian industry."⁶

The super-rich of the Western world were buying up huge chunks of Bahamian land, setting up "suitcase" companies to avoid the taxes they would have to pay at home, and investing in the growing tourism industry. Dr. Axel Wenner-Gren, the Swedish industrialist; Arthur Vining Davis of ALCOA; E. P. Taylor, Canadian liquor magnate; Huntington Hartford of A&P; Kenneth S. Parker, the emperor of pen and ink; Howard Hughes, entrepreneur and adventurer—these and many more were grabbing land, making themselves at home, adding to the wealth of the Bay Street Boys, and treating the Bahamian people like servants in their own country.

The most ambitious project of those years was the launching in 1955 of the Freeport bonanza of Wallace Groves, an American financier and ex-convict. Groves was granted fantastic concessions by the local government, and he proceeded to build a tax-free industrial and mercantile empire on the island of Grand Bahama. There was heavy investment in hotels, mafia-controlled gambling and other tourist attractions. Along the way, Groves liberally paid off the local political establishment, including not only such Bay Street fixtures as Sands and Roland Symonette, but even the venerable Etienne Dupuch of the Nassau Tribune.⁷

By the mid-fifties, Bahamian society had taken on a radically new look. The masses had been uprooted from the soil and were now crowded into Nassau and Freeport, where they worked in construction and in a host of service occupations in the tourism economy. Agriculture, which had always guaranteed that "home-produced food was cheap and plentiful," now declined into insignificance.⁸ Most of the necessities of life were imported, thus further enriching Bay Street merchants who controlled the import trade.

The working class was meanwhile becoming better organized and more conscious of its potential power. But the old Bay Street oligarchy was completely reactionary and unable to adjust to new conditions.

They kept wages at impossibly low levels and enforced strict laws against trade unions. And they added insult to injury by maintaining a system of racial discrimination that excluded black workers from most of the hotels and restaurants being built and serviced by their labour.

The social situation was becoming unstable, and it was a source of concern to foreign investors and British colonial authorities. Despite legislation forbidding it, the working class was forming trade unions, demanding higher wages and pressing for an end to racial discrimination. But the Bay Streeters who controlled the local government were still living in the nineteenth century, treating the country like a private plantation, and refusing to make any concessions. Imperialist interests looked around for a new leadership that could control the situation and avoid a confrontation that could threaten business and, perhaps, move in unpredictable directions.

Fortunately for the imperialists, a new leadership was available. It could be drawn from the small black middle class that had developed on the fringe of Bahamian society. For many years, there had been a very limited number of black businessmen, publishers and professionals who operated primarily in the poor black community. But as the new economy developed, the British had begun to train some blacks as lawyers and other sorts of professionals. These young professionals were often ambitious and determined to make a place for themselves in the booming world of tourism and high finance. They saw the Bay Street Boys mining gold from the new economic system, and they wanted in on the action.

The political instrument of this black middle class was the Progressive Liberal Party, formed in 1953. The PLP was founded initially by the traditional black business community, led by William Cartwright, H. M. Taylor, and Cyril Stevenson. But in almost no time, these older leaders were pushed aside and replaced by young British-trained lawyers, led by Lynden O. Pindling.

It is important to understand that from the very beginning, the professionals who formed the PLP had no wish to change the political or economic system in any way. It was, in fact, a system ideally suited for them, a system in which businessmen, lawyers, and other professionals could flourish and get rich. Although they needed the support of the masses of workers, they had no wish to place real power in the hands of workers. They did not want to take wealth and power away from the ruling class—they simply wanted to *join* the ruling class and share in the profits being enjoyed by the Bay Street Boys. The only thing standing in their way was the racial barrier that blocked the advance of all black Bahamians, including the black middle class.

The strategy of the PLP was to appear as the sole representative of the black majority against the white minority. This was a time of rising black consciousness all over the world. Both the civil rights movement in the United States and the liberation of African nations helped make the Bahamian people aware of black nationalism. Against this

background, it was easy to believe that all problems would be solved if only political power could be transferred to black leaders. In the heat of the moment, it was hard to see that the "brother" who led the struggle was just an oppressor of a different color.

By playing the racial issue to the hilt, the PLP easily gained control of the workers' movement. They agitated for an end to plural voting and gerrymandering that had always excluded the black majority from electoral power. They demanded an end to property qualifications for voting that had eliminated poor workers from the rolls. They pushed for mild labour reform legislation that would allow trade union organization. And by 1958, they were strong enough to lead a general strike which paralyzed the country for some three weeks.

Imperialist interests watched these developments and drew the proper conclusions. They saw a chance to stabilize the situation in an ideal way. All the ingredients for a neocolonial "solution" were now available. They were no longer forced to rely on the reactionary Bay Street merchants who were so hated by the masses. There was now a black leadership, British-trained and imbued with British culture, which had the full support of the masses. And yet these new leaders were in no way a threat to the existing economic system, since they wanted nothing more than political power and a chance to share in the profits of the system. Thus they would be able to control the discontent of the oppressed and exploited masses, without upsetting the imperialist applecart. A perfect neocolonial set-up! All that was needed was to force the old Bay Streeters to accept the new realities of the day.

The British moved to support the PLP. Shortly after the general strike of 1958, the Colonial Office announced that henceforth the British government would support "majority opinion" in the Bahamas, regardless of the composition of the House of Assembly. In other words, the Bay Street Boys would be forced to accept black participation in decisions affecting the colony. And since the PLP was the only black party, this meant, in effect, that the British would support the PLP, whether or not the party controlled Parliament.

The Colonial Office also demanded and got from the Bahamian Parliament the elimination of the property qualification for voting and of plural voting. At the same time, New Providence was given four additional seats in the House of Assembly to increase representation from the over-the-hill section of Nassau. These measures taken together immeasurably strengthened the hand of the PLP, although gerrymandering remained a problem for some years.

The British did not always move fast enough to please the PLP, and Pindling twice appeared before the United Nations to complain that "majority rule" was too slow in coming. But once the British recognized the need for a neocolonial solution, the outcome was never in doubt. In the 1956 elections, the PLP had won six of the twenty-nine seats in the House of Assembly. In 1962 the party won eight seats, despite continued gerrymandering. And in the decisive election of 1967,

the PLP gained control of the government. In that election, the PLP and the United Bahamian Party (UBP) of the Bay Street Boys each won eighteen seats, but the PLP took control by winning the support of two independents.

The PLP moved quickly to consolidate its control. Another election was called in 1968, in which the PLP increased its majority to twenty-nine of the thirty-eight seats. By 1972 a few dissidents had broken with Pindling and the PLP to form the Free National Movement (FNM), but they were able to win only nine seats.

During these years, the PLP prepared for formal independence from Britain. The Bay Streeters and their UBP fought against the move, clinging to the old colonial past in which they had been undisputed masters. But the British and their neocolonial proteges of the PLP moved quickly ahead. By 1973 the PLP had sufficiently secured its hold on government, and the transition from colonialism to neocolonialism took place in a cordial atmosphere, welcomed by the ruling circles of London and Washington and by the new ruling class in Nassau.

By the time of the 1977 election, the UBP had disappeared from the scene. The Bay Street Boys merged with some members of the FNM to form the Bahamian Democratic Party (BDP), while the FNM was also kept alive by others. In that election, the PLP captured thirty seats, while the BDP won six and the FNM just two. Thus was the domination of Pindling's PLP finally and completely consolidated.

And so neocolonialism came to the Bahamas. The victory of the PLP over the UBP symbolized for many Bahamians the victory of the masses over the Bay Street ruling class. And it is true that the masses did in fact win some limited democratic rights in this struggle. But time has revealed that the victory of the PLP was not a victory of the Bahamian people.

It is clear now that the PLP and the UBP merely represented two segments of a single ruling class, fighting over how to divide the wealth stolen from the people. On July 10, 1978, the *Financial Times* published a special supplement on the Bahamas, reviewing the policies and accomplishments of the PLP after more than a decade in power. The conclusion reached was that the best way to describe the PLP is as "a sort of black United Bahamian Party." A more accurate description would not be possible.

So we see how this neocolonial regime was established historically. We turn now to a brief examination of the policies that have been pursued by the PLP. This will help round out our understanding of the PLP as a puppet of imperialist interests.

C. Neocolonialism in Action

Many Bahamians who supported the PLP in the hope of liberation now realize that their situation is still as oppressive as ever. They believe that the PLP has been a failure, and they are looking for new leadership. This is a necessary and healthy development. But if we are to find the

right kind of leadership, if we hope to avoid making the same mistakes again, we have to look at the situation in the right light.

The first thing to understand in this respect is that the PLP has *not* failed, any more than the old UBP failed. The UBP had as its purpose to protect the interests of the Bay Street Boys and foreign investors. The PLP had as its purpose to protect the interests of the new black ruling class and those same foreign investors. And in this purpose, the PLP has not failed. It has not failed for the simple reason that from the beginning the PLP coldly and deliberately sold out the Bahamian people. To think that the PLP failed is to think that some other such party might do better. But the fact is that all such parties are instruments of ruling-class interests, and the masses can be served by none of them. This is why it is worth taking the time to see clearly that the policies of the PLP were from the outset those of a neocolonial puppet.

Right from the outset, Pindling made it clear where his loyalties lie. During the 1967 election campaign, he traveled to Washington "to reassure investors that their money would be safe under a PLP government."⁹ And as soon as the election was over, he rushed to reassure the ruling class, both Bahamian and foreign, that he was on their side. For example, during the campaign, he had attacked the establishment of gambling casinos, but now he hurried to promise that gambling would go on as usual. As a result, barely a week after the election, he won a vote of confidence from Jim Crosby, head of the Resorts International gambling syndicate.¹⁰ In fact, *Life* magazine reported that even during the campaign, PLP candidates had been given free airplane service by Mike McLaney, a confederate of mafia gambling czar, Meyer Lansky.¹¹

Even after abandoning his promise to end gambling, Pindling still vowed that he would never allow additional casinos to be opened.¹² And yet gambling has continued to expand, and it has now come to New Providence as well. The only action taken by the PLP has been a slight increase in the gaming tax, but still the tax has been kept at only a fraction of that collected in Puerto Rico and other Caribbean countries. Paul Adderley, who has since rejoined the PLP after the collapse of his National Democratic Party, bitterly attacked the PLP for failing to tax the casinos in any meaningful way. And the *New York Times* reported that the PLP had imposed a "ridiculously low levy," even though the country had "a desperate need of revenue" to provide at least some services to the people.¹³

By not taxing the casinos in any significant way, the PLP was simply continuing a policy of the Bay Street Boys, which is in fact a general policy of not taxing the wealthy in any way at all. The Bahamian economy has been built on a policy of not taxing the rich, and no other single factor is so basic to an understanding of which interests the system serves. The Bahamian people will know when there has been a significant change in favor of the working class by observing when they have a government that is willing to tax. But that government will not be a PLP government.

The UBP, under the leadership of Stafford Sands, turned the Bahamas into a tax haven for international capital, and it was on this basis that fortunes were made in tourism, real estate, and banking. The lack of almost all taxes was, of course, a boon both to international financiers and investors and to Bay Street merchants and real estate operators. But for the masses, it meant that government had virtually no income and so was able to provide almost none of the services that the workers of most capitalist countries take for granted. There was no money available for good education, medical care, child care, unemployment insurance, social welfare, or housing. There were few sewers, an inadequate water supply, and little in the way of sanitation services.

To independent observers, it has always been obvious that there can be no real improvement in the lives of the Bahamian people until a system of progressive taxation is introduced. As early as 1962, Michael Craton deplored the no-tax policy of the Bay Street government. He saw that while businessmen and lawyers were flourishing in such a climate, the "benefits to the average Bahamian are far less obvious." Craton condemned the "short-sighted policies" of the government, commenting that there was no future in maintaining "a poor government in a rich country."¹⁴

In 1968, Selden Rodman reported on a visit to the Bahamas. He noted that "the Bahamas' real hang up isn't mobsters and casinos but businessmen with total control over the gigantic tourist industry." He added that "Pindling's job is to tax these untaxables, to obtain the funds he needs for low-income housing, education, and social services." And he asked rhetorically: "Is there any other way?"¹⁵

The answer is, of course, that there is no other way. The system was devised to keep the wealth of the country concentrated in a few hands and to see that as little as possible escaped to meet human needs. Pindling and the PLP know this very well, and they knew when they continued the policies of the UBP that they were condemning the Bahamian people to continued suffering.

Yet from the beginning, Pindling made it clear that the system would be left quite undisturbed. In his initial victory statement in 1967, he "pledged without qualification not to impose either corporate or personal income taxes, and to honor the financial commitments made by the previous UBP government."¹⁶ And this promise, unlike the many he had made to the working people who supported him, he has faithfully kept. The Bahamas remains today a paradise for every conceivable tax dodge, just as it remains a country with virtually no social services to meet the most basic needs of the people.

Pindling did all he could to reassure imperialists and international financiers. Right after his election, he sent Labour Minister Randol Fawkes to Freeport, where he met with business leaders and presented an Industrial Relations Charter, which promised government intervention to control the discontent of workers and guarantee labour peace. This charter was heartily endorsed by robber baron Wallace Groves,

who called it "a sincere and brilliant achievement."¹⁷ Pindling himself went to Washington to reassure investors. And within a brief time, international capital was convinced that they had a new boy in their pocket. The oil tycoon, George S. Engle, said that "he would bet his last dollar on Mr. Pindling."¹⁸ And Robert Keno of the *Miami Herald* wrote a series of articles emphasizing that Pindling would do all he could to woo U.S. businessmen.¹⁹

But perhaps the best statement on the true meaning of the "quiet revolution" of the PLP came from Wallace Groves himself. Here we have the king of the tax dodgers, an American ex-convict who has multiplied his millions by paying off Stafford Sands and his friends to leave him free to operate without putting anything back into the country whose people he is exploiting. Surely such a bandit must have trembled to see a "party of the people" come to power! From an interview he gave in 1967, we can see just how seriously Groves took the promises of the PLP.

Sure, the Bay Streeters did wonders for the Bahamas, but times change. Their successors will do greater wonders. Next year will be bigger than last year. We're expanding all along the line. We have complete confidence in Mr. Pindling and his able associates. Black Power? That's political talk and means nothing. They're conservatives.²⁰

Pindling may have fooled the Bahamian people, but international capital had no misgivings—it was to be business as usual.

And so it has been. Foreign investors are having a field day, with nearly two billion dollars earning tax-free profits. Over 90 percent of hotel rooms are in foreign hands, and 90 percent of all companies are foreign-owned.²¹ Local Bay Street merchants and real estate operators are also prospering, since almost all essential goods must be imported and wealthy foreigners remain eager to buy Bahamian land.

Pindling and his gang are also doing quite well. They are making money faster than they ever dreamed possible, and several of them are now multimillionaires. Pindling's salary alone is outrageous in a poor country.²² And corruption and bribery remain a fixture of political life, with both the PLP and the opposition demanding big pay-offs for doing business.²³

But none of the wealth is finding its way to the Bahamian people. Since Pindling's election, the cost of living has doubled, while wages have remained stagnant. Unemployment has climbed from zero in 1967 to 9 percent in 1973 and nearly 30 percent today. Housing has deteriorated; medical care and education are inadequate; and there are virtually no social services. In such an atmosphere, prostitution is a way of life for many Bahamian women. Alcoholism and drug abuse are epidemic.²⁴

Yes, indeed, it is business as usual. The PLP has done its neocolonial work well. Even Stafford Sands would be pleased.

On June 25, 1967, the PLP issued a call to Bahamians living abroad,

urging them to return home and enjoy the new prosperity. They announced:

A new Bahamian was born on the tenth of January, and an old one died on the eleventh. Dead is the Bahamian who stood idly on street corners with his dirty hands in empty pockets. In his place is the new Bahamian-on-the-move, in whose hands are the instruments of nation building; in whose pockets are the rewards of honest toil.²⁵

Since that announcement, many more Bahamians have died, but those who live are still standing idly on street corners with empty pockets. On those corners, the "quiet revolution" has never been heard at all.

Notes

¹ Kwame Nkrumah, *The Revolutionary Path* (New York, 1973), p. 26.

² James Millette, "The Black Revolution in the Caribbean," in *Is Massa Day Dead?* ed. by Orde Coombs (Garden City, N.Y., 1974), p. 61.

³ *The Nassau Guardian*, May 18, 1979. The remark was by Jack Davis, president of Resorts International, before the New Jersey Casino Control Commission. Davis' testimony, and that of other Resorts International officers, is full of information on the extent of corruption in the Bahamas, involving both the PLP and the official opposition.

⁴ Michael Craton, *A History of the Bahamas* (London, 1962), p. 257.

⁵ The former expression is due to Craton, *op. cit.*, p. 281; the latter expression is found in Algernon Aspinall, *A Wayfarer in the West Indies* (Boston, 1931), p. 236.

⁶ Craton, *ibid.*

⁷ For a record of these dealings, see *New York Times*, February 15, 1965 and January 21, 1968. See also *The Wall Street Journal*, October 5, 1966.

⁸ Craton, *op. cit.*, p. 269.

⁹ Doris Johnson, *The Quiet Revolution in the Bahamas* (Nassau, 1972), p. 83. Johnson is a PLP propagandist.

¹⁰ *The Nassau Guardian*, February 8, 1967.

¹² *New York Times*, January 21, 1968.

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ Craton, *op. cit.*, p. 285.

¹⁵ Selden Rodman, *The Caribbean* (New York, 1968), p. 257.

¹⁶ Johnson, *op. cit.*, p. 102.

¹⁷ Randol Fawkes, *The Faith That Moved the Mountain* (Nassau, 1979), p. 282. Fawkes is a Nassau-trained lawyer and former labour leader who cooperated with the PLP for a time, but eventually fell from Pindling's grace and was driven from the political scene.

¹⁸ *The Nassau Guardian*, January 20, 1967.

¹⁹ Johnson, *op. cit.*, p. 111.

²⁰ Rodman, *op. cit.*, p. 259.

²¹ "Foreign Economic Trends and Their Implications for the United States" (#77-064—The Bahamas—May 1977), prepared by the American Embassy in Nassau for the Foreign Service, U.S. Department of State, released by the U.S. Department of Commerce.

²² *The Herald*, the voice of the PLP, in its issue of December 16, 1977, defended the latest round of pay raises for the PLP bosses. They denied that Pindling is

paid two and one-half times as much as the British Prime Minister, since part of Pindling's \$102,000 pay is supposed to go for "expenses." Actually, they say, his base pay is a "mere" \$70,000, only about twice that of the British PM. This in a country where the majority of people earn less than \$2000 a year, including "expenses."

²³ For a running account of the latest scandal involving pay-offs by Resorts International to a host of politicians of all parties, and to the parties themselves, see *The Nassau Guardian* of May and June, 1979.

²⁴ Alcoholism and drug addiction are sure symptoms of the disease of hopelessness in a society. There are no accurate figures on drug addiction. But in 1975, nearly 25 percent of admissions to Sandilands Rehabilitation Center were for alcoholism. And one study at Princess Margaret Hospital in Nassau suggests that 15 percent of hospitalizations and over 10 percent of deaths are due to alcohol abuse. (Source: *The Tribune*, July 4, 1977).

²⁵ Fawkes, *op. cit.*, p. 289.

Chapter 2

The Economics of Bahamian Neocolonialism

In this chapter, we want to examine in greater detail the economic situation created by neocolonialism in our country. This is important, because the Bahamas is so often said to be not only an island paradise, but a booming country with a far stronger economy than most Third World nations. So in the face of all this propaganda, the Bahamian people need to understand clearly what a dozen years of PLP rule have meant for the economy. Only then can we fully understand just how absurd it really is for that same PLP to be talking now about "social revolution." And only then can we see the kind of changes that must be made if our country is to have a future.

We have to look at the economy from two completely different points of view. Our society is a class-divided one, and in this kind of society, nothing can be understood in just one way. Everything has to be understood first from the point of view of the ruling class, and then from the point of view of the working class. These two classes have almost nothing in common, and what is good for one of them may be bad for the other. While this is true in all areas, it is especially true in economics.

First we will look at the economy from the point of view of the ruling class. What we will find is that the aspects of economic life which are important to the rich do indeed look quite favorable. Even from this point of view, we will see that things are unstable and not so rosy as they are often made out to be. But still and all, the outlook for this class is not at all bleak.

Next we will look at the economy from the point of view of the working class. Here the picture is very different. We will find that the condition of the masses is one of stagnation at best, but more usually one of increasing misery. The working people of the Bahamas will be seen to be victims of brutal exploitation and oppression.

Once these facts are clear, we can proceed, in Chapter Three, to see that what we have here is a *system* of exploitation. And on that basis, we can see that only a new and progressive system can offer our people genuine liberation.

A. Ruling-Class View of the Economy

As we said, from this point of view, the situation looks quite favorable. For example, in an article summarizing the year 1978, Clement Maynard, then Minister of Tourism, was enthusiastic:

The year just ended has been by far the best yet for our Bahamian tourism industry. We estimate that income, for the first time, broke the \$500 million barrier. We welcomed about 1,700,000 guests, including 1,180,000 who came by air and 520,000 who came by ship—all new records.¹

He went on to elaborate that since 1967, tourism had increased by 86 percent and the government's budget for the promotion of tourism had exceeded \$15 million. So it would seem that the major "industry" of the country is flourishing, an impression reinforced by John McCaughey of the *Financial Times*.

"It's better in the Bahamas," says the Tourist Board slogan on posters and tee shirts, and for once the copywriters may have hit upon the truth.²

McCaughey cites the optimism of businessmen and notes that "the atmosphere at a Rotary Club luncheon I attended in Nassau was even more jovial than is usual at such gatherings."

Of course, all this has to be taken with a grain of salt. The current optimism of both business and government is not guaranteed to last long. The present spurt of growth follows a long period (1970-75) when the economy of the country actually showed a *negative* growth rate (-5%), a record worse than all but one of the countries of North and Central America. And during all the years of the tourism boom (1960-1975), the rate of growth was only 1.1 percent, lower than twenty-five of the thirty countries of North and Central America.³

But for the moment, international capital is at least mildly optimistic, and with optimism has come a modest increase in investment and a tendency to launch new tourism ventures. Government officials are talking about a construction boom to service increased numbers of tourists and are painting a rosy picture of economic growth and well-being.⁴

Furthermore, the country's other major "industry"—international banking—is continuing to prosper alongside the renewed vigor of tourism. Some 273 financial institutions are now doing business in the Bahamas, many of them branches of foreign banks dealing in the Eurocurrency market.⁵ Branches of U.S. banks in the Bahamas (and the Caymans) hold one-third of all assets of foreign branches of these banks. And the trust business, while it has slowed somewhat in recent years, is continuing to grow at a healthy rate.⁶

Bahamian politicians become irate at any suggestion that the country is backward or underdeveloped. When Jack Davis of Resorts International testified to the poverty of most Bahamians, BDP leader, J. Henry Bostwick, was indignant.

They talked so bad about us that you would believe we were some little banana republic way down in the Caribbean who can't afford to feed our people and with no health services.⁷

And indeed, if we look at the Bahamian economy as it is measured by international capital, Mr. Bostwick's resentment seems justified. The

World Bank, which is the principal financial arm of Western imperialism, ranks countries of the world according to their relative Gross National Products (GNP), which is a measure of the total value of goods and services produced by an economy. By this measure, the Bahamas appears to be one of the more developed countries of the world, certainly not "some little banana republic." Of the 182 countries listed, the Bahamas has a higher GNP per capita than some 130 of them, thus ranking in the top 30 percent of all countries by this standard. In fact, with a per capita GNP of \$3,110 (in 1975), the Bahamas ranks higher than any other country of the Caribbean, except Bermuda and the U.S. Virgin Islands.⁸

By other measures, the Bahamian economy looks much less impressive, but still appears relatively strong. The trading position of the country is very poor. Imports always exceed exports, even if we include petroleum products that are imported merely for refining and re-export. And if petroleum products are excluded, imports may run ahead of exports by a margin of three to one or more, including import of a high percentage of the most basic necessities of life. Thus the balance of trade is always radically unfavorable.⁹ Non-oil imports alone are equal to more than 40 percent of the total GNP. And if we leave out of account the portion of GNP (about 77 percent) contributed by tourism, which is almost wholly non-productive, we find that (non-oil) imports exceed domestic production by nearly two to one.¹⁰

But while the Bahamas must import a great deal and has little to export in return, its financial position has not been as bad as might be expected. The reason for this is simply that tourism has been bringing in enough dollars to pay off the trade deficit.¹¹ The balance of payments position of the country has varied between small deficits and modest surpluses, and there has actually been an increase in holdings of foreign reserves.¹² Consequently, the country has a fairly strong credit position with international lending institutions, despite the fact that total public debt has risen to better than 50 percent of GNP.¹³

So we see that while the economic situation of the country would become desperate almost immediately, if there should be a significant drop in tourism income, the "tourism factor" has in recent years allowed the Bahamas to look fairly strong, by comparison with most Third World and developing countries. It is a terribly skewed economy; a one-sided, one-dimensional, non-productive and parasitic economy; an economy living on borrowed time and the whims of international tourism. But by many of the measures used by international capital, it appears relatively stable and solvent. With no taxes and little regulation, it is a good place to make a quick buck, so long as the capitalist doesn't tie up too much capital for an extended period. Despite its dependence and its vulnerability to outside forces, it does indeed appear in a much stronger position than "some little banana republic."

B. Working-Class View of the Economy

As is so often the case, the measures used by international capital conceal as much as they reveal. These figures tell us that the Bahamas is not a bad place to do business, that wealth is being generated and that money is being made. By *somebody*. But we learn nothing about how that wealth is being distributed or used. How much of the money being made finds its way into the pockets of working men and women or into services that meet their needs? The working class has no interest merely in learning that money is being made. What is interesting is: Who is making money and whose interests are being served? There is more than one way to measure the success or failure of an economic system. And when we look at the Bahamian economy from the workers' point of view, it begins to look more and more like "some little banana republic."

The vast majority of Bahamians live in poverty, and a very high percentage live at a level of bare subsistence. Even if we look at incomes alone, the poverty is obvious. But if we also look at what it costs people to live we have to be amazed that people manage to survive at all. In this section, we will illustrate this basic fact, by looking at the following factors: (1) income and income distribution; (2) unemployment; (3) cost of living; and (4) social services and taxation. While other factors might be considered also, we think this will give a sufficiently accurate picture of the economic oppression under which most Bahamians live.

(1) Income and Income Distribution

The World Bank estimates per capita income in 1978 at about \$2,000, only a slight increase from the 1973 level of \$1,943.¹⁴ But this figure really doesn't tell us much, because most of the total income is concentrated in a few hands. Thus in 1975, about 58 percent of all households (note here we are speaking of whole households, not individuals) received annual incomes of less than \$5,000; and in the out-islands, the figure was an astonishing 73 percent of households receiving less than \$5,000. Furthermore, 32.2 percent of households received less than \$2,000! In New Providence, the approximately 40 percent of households that are headed by women had a mean income of only \$4,063 annually. And of large families with ten or more members, over 48 percent had incomes under \$5,000.¹⁵

If we look more closely at the distribution of income, we find that not only are there a few rich and many poor, but that the gap between the rich and the poor is growing wider every day.

For purposes of comparison, we may first note that in the United States, where the distribution of income is extremely unfair, the richest 20 percent of Americans receive 41.6 percent of income, while the poorest 20 percent receive only 5.5 percent. In plainer terms, this means that for every \$100 earned in the U.S., \$41.60 goes to the richest fifth, while only \$5.50 goes to the poorest fifth.¹⁶

Now in an economy such as the Bahamas, where there is so much less total income to go around, it is especially important that what is available be distributed more fairly than in a rich country such as the U.S. And yet what we find is that the distribution is even worse in the Bahamas than in the U.S. Of every \$100 earned in the Bahamas, the poorest fifth receive only \$2.90, while the richest fifth receive \$50.60. That means that *over half* of all income goes to the richest 20 percent of the people.¹⁷

A more detailed breakdown of income figures highlights the situation further. If we look at the lowest 40 percent of the people, we still find that they earn a total of only 12.3 percent of all income. By contrast the highest 5 percent (i.e., five out of every one hundred Bahamians) receive 20.8 percent of income. So a small elite corners the vast bulk of income.¹⁸

Income distribution in the Bahamas is not only more unfair than in the United States, but it compares poorly to most developing countries. Thus among all High Income Developing Countries (the category in which the Bahamas is placed by the World Bank) the highest 5 percent receive 16.1 percent of income (compared to 20.8 percent in the Bahamas) and the lowest 20 percent receive 6.6 percent of income (compared to 2.9 percent in the Bahamas). And the Bahamas also fares badly when compared with many Caribbean countries, including Barbados, the Dominican Republic, and Guyana.

More generally, the distribution of income in the Bahamas is more unfair than the average of *any* category of countries in the world, regardless of how poor they may be. In other words, despite its relatively high GNP, the Bahamian economy is more severely unbalanced and more unjust than most "banana republics" or countries of any other sort.¹⁹

Finally, we may note that incomes are not only very low for most Bahamians, but there is not even the consolation of gradual improvement. Poverty might be easier to take if it were clear that the situation was improving and wages rising. But the fact is that wages are *not* rising, nor have they varied much for most workers in a decade or more. Here is a comparison of wage rates over time for the most important categories of working-class employment.

(Figures in Dollars)				
Job Category	1970	1972	1973	1977
Carpenter (per hr.)	1.90	2.05	2.05	n.a.*
Stenographer (per wk.)	100-125	100-135	100-135	100-135
Cook (per wk.)	40-45	75-100	75-100	85-100
Housemaid (per wk.)	30-35	35-50	35-50	25-55
Cocktail waitress (per wk.)	25	40	50	50
Labourer (per hr.)	n.a.	1.60	1.60	1.46

(Continued on next page)

Job Category	1970	1972	1973	1977
Gardener (per wk.)	40	50-80	50-80	40-80
Farm helper (per wk.)	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	40
Farm worker (per wk.)	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	55

*n.a. means not available

(Source: figures provided by the Labour Exchange and the Ministry of Labour, published in *Bahamas Handbook* for 1970, 1973, 1974-75, and 1978-79)

So we see that for most workers, wages have changed almost none since 1970, while a few others improved slightly before 1972 but have remained stagnant since that time. And those who doubt the accuracy of the low figures may be convinced by the recent report of hotel maids in San Salvador that they are paid \$7.50 per day, less National Insurance deductions!²⁰

On the basis of income alone, then, most Bahamians must work very hard just in order to be poor. But this brings up something even more absurd. When we talk about a maid working six days a week and supporting a family on \$2,500 a year, or when we talk about a labourer trying to keep his children alive on the same amount, we are in fact talking about the *lucky* workers. The most outstanding feature of the Bahamian economy today is that a large sector of the labour force can find no job of any kind.

(2) Unemployment

No one knows what the real rate of unemployment is, and the government is careful to release as few figures as possible. It has given no figures on unemployment since 1975, and the few figures it has released have been contradictory and designed to serve its own purposes. Nonetheless, even the government admits that the rate is outrageously high and has been rising steadily. Officially, unemployment was given as 7.5 percent in 1970, 8.6 percent in 1973, and 21.2 percent in 1975. Today it is likely above 25 percent and probably nearer 30 percent.²¹ This compares with an estimated 8.8 percent rate of unemployment for all Latin American and Caribbean countries. And since the World Bank classifies the Bahamas as a High Income Developing Country, it is interesting to note that the unemployment rate for all such countries is estimated at 5.1 percent.²²

But all estimates of unemployment are largely guesswork, since as the *Financial Times* says, "There are no reliable statistics on the subject."²³ Since there is no program of unemployment insurance or other aid for jobless workers, those out of work have little reason to register as unemployed. Those who go to the Labour Exchange and register are probably counted in some fashion, but with so few jobs and so little hope of finding work, there is not much reason to register. To this we must add the fact that many of those listed as employed are really working only a few hours a week or on a temporary basis on a small construction project or something of the sort. And finally, thousands of

Bahamians have emigrated to the United States and Britain in search of work. When all these factors are taken into account, we can be sure that the unemployment rate is much higher than the government admits.

One thing we do know is that unemployment among young people coming out of school is on the order of 75 percent.²⁴ And with over 44 percent of the population now under the age of 15, and with the second highest population growth rate in North and Central America (3.9 percent), the number of young people out of work is growing at an astronomical rate.²⁵

The PLP knows all this, of course. When they pretend that the situation is improving, they know very well they are lying. All one has to do is walk into the street to know that they are filled with young people who are not only unemployed, but who see the job situation as so hopeless that they never even bother to register for work. While politicians doctor the figures to promote their own interests, Bahamian youth are forced into hustling, petty theft, dope dealing and prostitution by an economic system that offers them no hope.

(3) Cost of Living

What we have seen so far is that many Bahamians can find no work at all, and that those who work take home only a bare subsistence wage. But still this is only part of the story. We haven't yet looked at what it costs people to live. Once the cost of living is taken into account, an already bad situation becomes much worse.

Once again, we begin with some bare statistics. In August of 1979, the latest available as of this writing, the official Retail Price Index stood at 172.9. This means that what could be bought for \$100 in the base months of November/December, 1971, would now cost \$172.90. And the rate of inflation, which had been fairly low for three years, is again rising and is currently running at an annual rate of about 12 percent. The prices of both food and clothing are running ahead of other items, with food increasing at an annual rate of 12.1 percent and clothing at 26.6 percent.²⁶ All this after one official assured us recently that "there is no question that . . . the Bahamas has successfully come to grips with inflation."²⁷

Now if we combine this information with what we learned above about wages, we can gain some further insight into the plight of our people. To see this point, we need to distinguish between *nominal wages* and *real wages*. A worker's nominal wage is the actual number of dollars that he or she brings home; and we have seen that nominal wages have remained about the same since 1970. On the other hand, the real wage is measured not in terms of dollars, but in terms of what those dollars will buy. And since it now costs \$172.90 to buy what you could buy in 1971 with \$100, it is easy to see that a worker who is still earning what he earned in 1971 is *much worse off* than he was then. His real wage has *declined* enormously, so that his economic situation has deteriorated badly.

The government itself admits that real wages declined by 10.9 percent between 1970 and 1973.²⁸ Since that time, they have followed their usual practice of refusing to release figures that are unpleasant. But we know that since 1973, we have gone through our worst recession in recent history. So we can be sure that real wages have gone down considerably in the last six years.

Another way of bringing out the poverty of Bahamian workers is by comparing them with U.S. workers, since it is from the United States that most imports come, and since it is U.S. advertising that shapes the needs and desires of Bahamians. To begin with, we note that the per capita income of Bahamians is barely half the per capita income of Mississippi, which is by far the poorest of the United States. And the per capita income of the U.S. as a whole is over *three times* as high. And yet the cost of living in the Bahamas is *much more expensive* than in the U.S. Food costs on average about 18 percent more in Nassau than in New York. A Bahamian worker who pays \$35-\$40 a week for a two-room shack without indoor plumbing may not be paying more than a U.S. worker, but he is getting far less. For electricity Bahamians pay more than *twice* as much as the resident of an average American city. And for water (even the impure water of Nassau) the Bahamian has to pay *more than six times as much* as his American counterpart. Clothing is also far above U.S. prices. Health care is at least as expensive, unless one waits for hours at the only clinic, that at Princess Margaret Hospital in Nassau. And finally, luxury items such as television sets and automobiles are much more expensive, because of high import duties on such items.²⁹

In short, the Bahamian worker earns far less than an American worker, but the cost of his survival is much higher. Not only do 70 percent of Bahamians receive incomes that would place them below the official poverty line of the United States, but they are faced with living costs which lower their real income by at least another 20 percent.

(4) Social Services and Taxation

There is one other important respect in which Bahamian workers fall short not only of U.S. workers, but of those of most capitalist countries, including those of the Caribbean. This is the area of social services. And the most accurate statement we can make about this is to say that there simply are no social services.

When a worker in most capitalist countries is thrown out of work, his situation is serious, but it may not be utterly desperate. He can at least draw unemployment compensation for some weeks. His family will probably be eligible for some modest welfare payments. And so long as his income is inadequate, he will receive some sort of food allowance, so that at least starvation can be avoided.

In the Bahamas, an unemployed worker is just out of luck. There is no regular system of welfare. Occasionally, a mother with starving children may be able to beg a voucher for two or three dollars, but even

that is irregular and uncertain. Largely out of their own pockets, workers pay for a limited National Insurance scheme. But unless they become disabled, workers can receive nothing from this fund until they reach old age. The old-age pension plan is simply a continuation of the one established by the Bay Street Boys. It allows a maximum payment of \$40 per month, and even that is available only if a person's other income is less than \$10 per week. Such a program is almost more of an insult than a help!

The reason that there are no social services is not far to seek. It is because the government is poor, and the government is poor for the simple reason that it refuses to levy taxes on those who have all the wealth of the nation. The only significant taxes fall mainly on the poor, not on the rich, a situation that makes it impossible to raise enough revenue to meet human needs.

There certainly are no taxes on the rich. There are no corporation taxes, capital gains taxes, profits taxes or personal income taxes. Nor are there any inheritance or successor taxes. The only taxes that affect the wealthy are a small property tax on developed property and a gaming tax. But together these taxes are so low that they generate a total of *less than 10 percent* of the government's meagre revenue.³⁰

In a statement rarely matched for sheer hypocrisy, Central Bank Governor, T. B. Donaldson, recently justified the lack of taxes. Pointing to the low per capita income of the country, he argued that there is not a sufficiently "broad base" for income taxation: "We just don't have that large a middle class."³¹ What he is saying is that since most Bahamians are poor, we couldn't get much tax from them, so there is no point in an income tax. What Mr. Donaldson conveniently neglects to mention is that a few Bahamians are *not* poor, but are rich. He also fails to mention all the tax-free profits being taken from the country by foreign investors, corporations and banks. It never occurs to him to talk about the large taxes that could be collected from these "untaxables." From his, the ruling class point of view, the only people to be taxed are working-class people, and since they don't have much income, there is no point in an income tax.

However, the fact that there are no taxes on the rich does not mean that there are no taxes at all. When the Bahamas is called a tax haven, many people assume that there are no taxes of any kind. If that were true, the government would have no revenue at all. The government is not poor because it has no taxes, but because it places the whole burden on the poor and working people, and there is a limit to how much revenue can be collected from those with so little. As they say, you can't get blood from a turnip.

The whole revenue-generating policy of the government is designed to place the main burden on the working people. What little income the government does have comes largely (over 60 percent) from import duties, the cost of which falls most heavily on the poor. As we have seen, almost all basic necessities are imported, and most are subject to a

tariff of 32½ percent (clothing 22½ percent), with some items, such as automobiles and TV sets, subject to much higher duties. The government is fond of claiming that it helps the working class by lowering tariffs on raffia and a few food items, such as corned beef, evaporated milk and potatoes. But the fact is that there are very few such items, and for almost all their needs people pay the full duty. Furthermore, import duties have actually increased since independence, because of the elimination of preferentially lower duties on items from Britain and the Commonwealth.

Now import duty is also a form of tax. But it is a vicious and highly regressive tax, especially when most basic necessities are imported. The worker must pay the same price for his rice as the millionaire. But as a percentage of his income, the burden on the poor man is much heavier. So instead of a progressive tax, under which those who have more pay a higher rate, there is a system under which *the rate goes higher as your income goes lower*.

C. Conclusion

The rich get richer and the poor get poorer. That is true in any capitalist country, but in the Bahamas, it is even worse than in most. Not only does the wealth created by Bahamian workers go into the pockets of the rich. Much of it doesn't even stay in the country. Lack of taxation enables foreign investors to send all their profits home, while the Bahamian government is too poor to help its own people. And as prices and unemployment rise while wages remain stagnant, an impossible situation becomes more impossible every day.

This is the economic meaning of neocolonialism. It is a stark reality, an intolerable reality, a reality that every Bahamian must deal with throughout his or her life. In the glare of this reality, Pindling's empty rhetoric about "social revolution" stands out nakedly as a cruel hoax. But in order to deal with the situation effectively, we need to see how political neocolonialism and economic neocolonialism combine to form a *system of oppression*. Once this is done, we can better assess what the future holds. This is the subject of the next chapter.

Notes

¹ *Bahamas* magazine, Winter, 1979.

² *Financial Times*, July 10, 1978.

³ *World Bank Atlas*, 1977. The figures are for rate of growth of per capita Gross National Product.

⁴ See, for example, Pindling's "friend of labour" speech before the Freeport Unions, reported in *The Nassau Guardian*, June 5, 1979. Incidentally, while construction has picked up in the last year or so, neither the number of construction starts nor their value has approached the real "boom" years of 1969 and 1970.

⁵ *Bahamas Handbook*, 1976-77, pp. 160-173.

⁶ *Financial Times*, July 10, 1978.

⁷ *The Nassau Guardian*, May 18, 1979.

⁸ *World Bank Atlas*, 1977.

⁹ *Europa Year Book*, 1978, p. 1589.

¹⁰ "Foreign Economic Trends" (for full reference, see note 21 of Chapter 1); *World Bank Atlas*, 1977; *World Bank Country Data*, 1978; *Europa Year Book*, 1978, p. 1589.

¹¹ Some 85 percent of foreign exchange earnings derive from tourism. (Source: Brent L. Probinsky, "A Political History of the Bahama Islands, 1967-1973: From Black Majority Rule to Independence," in *Latinamericanist* (published by University of Florida, Center for Latin American Studies), Vol. 13, no. 4, June 1, 1978.

¹² Central Bank of the Bahamas, *Annual Report and Statement of Accounts*, 1977.

¹³ Central Bank of the Bahamas, *Quarterly Review*, September, 1978.

¹⁴ *Financial Times*, July 10, 1978; Department of Statistics, *Household Income in the Bahamas*, 1975.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ *World Tables*, 1976 (published for the World Bank by Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976).

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ *The Nassau Guardian*, June 15, 1979.

²¹ Department of Statistics, "Labour Force and Income Distribution, 1973," in *Monthly Newsletter*, July/August, September/October, and November/December, 1974; *Financial Times*, July 10, 1978; "Foreign Economic Trends" (for full reference, see note 21 of Chapter 1).

²² World Bank, *World Economic and Social Indicators* (World Bank Report no. 700/78/04), October, 1978.

²³ *Financial Times*, July 10, 1978.

²⁴ "Foreign Economic Trends" (for full reference, see note 21 of Chapter 1).

²⁵ *World Bank Atlas*, 1977.

²⁶ Department of Statistics, *Retail Price Index*, August, 1979.

²⁷ J. E. Tertullien, *The Retail Price Index: Its Meaning and Significance* (Department of Statistics Occasional Paper, January, 1978), p. 5.

²⁸ Department of Statistics, "Labour Force and Income Distribution, 1973."

²⁹ Cost of living figures for the Bahamas were derived from on-the-spot checks in markets and from *Bahamas Handbook*, 1973, pp. 149-153 and *Bahamas Handbook*, 1978-79, pp. 250-51, 268-269, 351-352. Figures for the U.S. were derived from on-the-spot checks in markets, from telephone interviews with utility companies in Indiana and from budget estimates published periodically by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

³⁰ *Bahamas Handbook*, 1978-79, pp. 321-338; Commonwealth of the Bahamas, *Approved Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure Recurrent and Capital*, 1978.

³¹ *The Herald*, April 9, 1977.

Chapter 3

Prospects for the Future

The situation of the Bahamas today is a human tragedy beyond description. One must actually live in the country among Bahamian people to realize the degradation that we have suffered and continue to suffer. In the first two chapters, we have tried to give some small indication of the dimensions of the problem.

The traditional way of life of our people has been destroyed. We have lost touch with the land and the sea. We have been turned into a nation of hustlers and servants catering to the whims of wealthy visitors. Our young people can find no work at all and are being turned into street people with no hope or direction. The strength of our traditional communities and families is being destroyed bit by bit. Our culture is being eroded and replaced by cheap commercialism and gaudy pageants to please the tourists.

And in exchange for all we have given up, what have we gotten in exchange? Have we become prosperous? Have we become independent? Have we gained more control over our affairs? On the contrary. We are still poor, unemployed, and becoming more so every year. Our country is dominated by foreign investors and imperialist interests more than ever before. And the leaders we elected to represent us have sold us out for thirty pieces of silver, leaving us with no voice in our own country.

Now what we must understand is that this situation will get no better under present conditions. So long as we are saddled with the present economic system, our situation will become steadily more hopeless. And so long as we are saddled with the present political misleaders, no effective steps will be taken to change the situation. What we are faced with today is not simply a long list of problems and difficulties. It is rather *a system of exploitation and oppression*. And a genuine social revolution will be achieved only when this system is finally replaced. The purpose of the present chapter is to make this clear.

A. An Economic System Without Promise

The present economy was the brainchild of Stafford Sands. Pindling and the PLP have simply carried forward the plan devised by him. What has been created is an economy which brings in a good many dollars, but does it in a way that makes the condition of the people and the nation worse instead of better.

To understand why this is so, we need to look at the three basic features of the present economy:

- (1) It is based almost wholly on tourism, with banking as the only other industry;
- (2) it is dominated by foreign capital;
- (3) to attract and keep foreign capital, the country is maintained as a tax haven.

These features work together to insure that the situation of the country remains hopeless.

The entire Bahamian economy as it is presently structured is ridiculously unbalanced, one-sided, parasitic, and helplessly dependent on outside forces. It relies almost completely on Americans and others having extra cash to spend on travel and choosing to spend it in Nassau or Freeport. A recession, such as that of 1974-75, is devastating. But as surely as night follows day, the world capitalist economy will continue to fall into periodic recessions. Furthermore, most economists agree that the United States economy, on which we are most dependent, is in a state of long-range stagnation, with the likelihood of a gradual decline in coming years. Thus when PLP politicians predict a booming future for tourism growth, they are showing us wishful thinking, not sound economic analysis.

But for the moment, let us assume that tourism will remain healthy in coming years. Even if this unlikely assumption comes to pass, the people should not expect good times. For there are many other problems with an economy based wholly on tourism.

For one thing, it is by now obvious that this one-sided economy cannot provide the jobs our people must have to survive. Pindling came to power promising work for all. In 1974, as unemployment was rising, he was still promising "sufficient jobs to occupy every able bodied man who wishes to work in the country."¹ And in 1977, he was still promising to wipe out unemployment by 1980.² But these fellows know very well that the present economy cannot find work for people. Both tourism and banking have been enjoying a rate of growth far greater than at any time in the past and greater than could be reasonably expected to continue in the future. And yet during this "boom" period, unemployment has been *rising* at a steady rate. So we see that even in its best moments, this economy cannot stop the rise of unemployment. And Pindling knows this as well as anyone. He goes on promising full employment not because he doesn't know the truth, but because he doesn't care. His purpose is not to tell the truth, but to fool the people.

Not only can tourism not provide enough jobs, it destroys every other form of economic life. All the resources of the country go into promoting and providing for the tourism industry. There is nothing left to develop agriculture, fishing, or manufacturing of any kind. As a result, we have a country with as much land as Jamaica, but with no significant agriculture. We are surrounded by a sea teeming with life, yet we import fish from Miami. And our people sit around the blocks idle, because there is no productive industry of any kind to employ their energies.

As agriculture has been destroyed, the population has been crowded into the cities, seeking the only jobs that are available. And while the people live in shacks in urban slums, wealthy foreigners and a few rich Bahamians are buying up all the prime land for real estate development. In fact, land is now so expensive that most Bahamians can't afford even a tiny piece of their own country on which to build a small house.

With no agriculture, no fishing and no industry, we are forced to import virtually all the necessities of life. This keeps Bay Street merchants rich, but it means that everything is exorbitantly expensive. And it means that almost all the dollars that do come into the country have to go right back out again to pay for imports.

In addition to these obvious effects, massive tourism also creates social strains in our community, especially since most Bahamians live in such poverty. The Bahamas has by far the greatest density of tourists in the world. For example, in 1976, the population was estimated at 211,000, while tourist arrivals were put at 1,402,640—so that tourists outnumbered Bahamians by a rate of more than six to one! Not only does this contribute to prostitution, drug-dealing and petty crime, but it creates other problems as well. It is difficult and painful for a people who must live on so little themselves to be surrounded by tourists showing off their wealth. Not surprisingly, it often leads to resentment and a certain level of hostility towards tourists. This hostility worries the ruling class because they fear a loss of tourist dollars. But needless to say, it doesn't bother them enough to deal with the social and economic plight of the masses which gives rise to the bad feelings in the first place.

These are just some of the consequences of building an economy on tourism alone, and we can see that many of the ills caused by such imbalance tend to grow worse and worse with time. And all of these facts should be well known to government leaders, since they have been documented time and again. One recent example is a study by John Bryden, published in 1973 by Cambridge University Press.³ Bryden took a close look at the tourism industry both in the Bahamas and in the rest of the Caribbean, and after examining all the factors involved, he concluded that "net social benefits from tourism are rather small in the Caribbean."⁴ His data show clearly that while foreign investors, merchants, and real estate operators profit greatly from a one-sided tourist economy, the impact on the masses is one of far greater harm than benefit. So once again, when the government tells us that tourism will bring good times to all of us, they know very well that they are lying. The facts are plain.

None of this is meant to suggest that tourism, in and of itself, is a bad thing. A tourism industry owned and controlled by the Bahamian people, which was part of a balanced and dynamic economy, could be of great benefit. Our islands are indeed beautiful, and we always want to welcome visitors to come and share their beauty with us. But we cannot base our future on tourism alone, and we cannot leave tourism in the hands of a few profiteers, whether Bahamian or foreign.

The future of our economy clearly depends on diversification. We must have agriculture, fishing, and industry, and we must exploit our resources and raw materials. Agriculture especially is absolutely essential, and it must be the bedrock of our economy. So long as we are unable to feed ourselves (as we once did in the past), there is little hope of overcoming our dependency and achieving a degree of economic maturity.

The question is not whether we must have a more diversified and independent economy. The only question is how it is to be achieved. And here is where we are crippled by the other two basic features of our economic system, our reliance on foreign capital and our lack of a system of taxation.

The development of agriculture, fishing, and industry will require a large infusion of capital, especially since we are forced to build from the ground up. But where is this investment to come from? Do we seriously expect foreign investors to make this effort? Why should they? They are making quick and easy profits in real estate, tourism and banking. Why should they risk large sums on farming and fishing ventures which will probably not yield large returns for some years? The investor is concerned with profit and profit alone. He is not in the business of serving humanity or national development. It would be foolish to expect significant investment from this source.

There is one way to enlist the aid of the foreign investor, however. We could put heavy taxes on his profits, so that the wealth he is taking from our country could be kept in the country to aid development. But this the present regime cannot and will not do. Since they rely completely on foreign investment and since they are servants of international capital, there is absolutely no chance that they will institute a system of meaningful taxation. Pindling may not keep his promises to end unemployment, but we can be sure he will keep his promise to maintain the Bahamas as a tax haven for foreign investors. Neocolonial leopards do not change their spots.

Therefore, we must have a more diversified and independent economy, but so long as the present system endures, such an economy is impossible. There may be token efforts of one kind or another, but the fundamental situation will not change. We will not break the stranglehold of foreign investors, we will not overcome the one-sidedness of our parasitic economy, and we will not gain control over our own destiny.

If one looks only at the tourist dollars flowing into the country and at the Gross National Product statistics, there may appear to be development in the Bahamas. But what we can now see is that it is *a development that breeds underdevelopment*. The river of dollars flowing in and out conceals the fact that the basic economy is primitive, non-productive, and totally dependent. As Guyanese historian, Walter Rodney, points out, economic development is a function of the extent to which a people comes to control its own destiny.³ Of course, no na-

tion can be wholly self-sufficient, since all must to some extent exchange goods and services to acquire what cannot be produced at home. But a developed nation is one in which the indigenous economy is able to provide many of the most basic needs of the people and in which trade takes place on a basis of equality and mutual benefit. Thus the true definition of an underdeveloped country is one in which the people are helplessly dependent on the workings of outside forces for their very survival. And *by this definition, the Bahamas today is one of the most underdeveloped nations of the world*.

But we still have looked at only part of the picture. To understand fully why the Bahamas remains dependent and underdeveloped, we have to look at the role of the Bahamas within the worldwide system of imperialism. This country and its economy may not serve the Bahamian people, but it serves very well the broader imperialist system. And so long as we are forced to play this assigned role in a larger system, we can expect little basic improvement in our situation.

B. The Role of the Bahamas in the Imperialist System

As we have seen, imperialism means the political and economic domination of other countries by the big imperialist powers, whether that domination is direct or indirect. It follows that the purpose of imperialism is to serve the interests of those big powers. In fact, imperialism is nothing but capitalism at a particular stage of its development, and its purpose is to serve the interests of the capitalist class which controls each of the imperialist countries.

The goal of each capitalist and of the capitalist system as a whole is to generate as much profit as possible. A capitalist may be in the business of manufacturing shoes or automobiles or soap, or he may be a banker or an import merchant or a resort owner. But whatever label he operates under, every capitalist is really in the same business—the business of making money. The capitalist invests his money wherever it will bring him the highest return, and he will take whatever steps he needs to take to keep profits high. For him, there are only two possibilities—either he expands and grows richer or he is wiped out. If his profits don't continue to grow at a steady rate, he is likely to find himself out of business, due to competition from other capitalists.

The domination of other countries is one effective way of guaranteeing profits. And imperialist powers have shown again and again that they will go to any lengths to help their capitalists dominate other countries. All over the globe, they have supported brutal dictatorships and have provided the arms and training for tyrants to use in torturing and killing their own people. A river of blood runs through many countries from Vietnam to South Africa to Iran to Chile and beyond. And as that river finally empties into the banks and treasuries of the imperialist powers, the blood turns into gold.

Of course, when they can do so, the imperialists prefer more gentle methods. If they can find some local politicians or generals who can protect their interests and still keep the people quiet, they will gladly cover the iron fist with the velvet glove of neocolonialism. They are happy to allow a few "natives" to grab a little of the loot, provided their own profits are not threatened. But the method adopted, whether bloody or not, is of secondary importance. The name of the game is profit, and whatever is necessary for profit will be done.

Those countries that are victims of this system help the imperialist countries in many ways. Some of them are rich in one or more *raw materials*, and in these cases, their whole economy will be restructured around providing those raw materials. This usually means that those sectors of the economy that do not serve imperialist interests are allowed to languish. So it often happens that a people who used to meet most of their own needs from their own economy must now import much of what they need, simply because the whole economy is geared to imperialist demands.

In this way, and in other ways as well, the country dominated by imperialism is converted into a *market* for the products of the imperialist power. In order to keep profits rising, a capitalist system must produce more and more goods, and for this reason there is a constant search for new markets. Each country dominated by imperialism provides one more market. And once an imperialist power controls the market of a country, it quickly gains a stranglehold. For example, if a country buys all of its machinery and automobiles from an imperialist country, then it will be forced to buy replacement parts, accessories, etc., from the same source. In this way, the market not only grows, but is locked into economic dependency.

Oftentimes, capitalist firms will move their factories and other production facilities to one of the victim countries. This has a number of advantages for the firm, the most obvious of which is *lower wages*. In developed capitalist countries, workers are often somewhat better organized and able to demand relatively higher wages. By shifting production to another country, the capitalist is able to offset the effects of this. First of all, wages are usually kept almost at a starvation level. But just as important, the demands of workers at home can be controlled to some extent, since the capitalist can now threaten to move abroad and leave them all without jobs. And when such intimidation is not possible, it is always possible to pay the workers at home a little more, by using some of the excess profits that come from low wages in the victim countries.

These are only some of the ways in which victim countries are used to serve the interests of the ruling class of the imperialist country. Each of the victim countries may have its own particular role to play. But there is one constant ingredient, and that is that the economy of the country serves not its own people, but imperialist interests. The people of victim countries are often told that they need the foreign investors to keep their

economy going. But the fact is that it is the imperialists who need the victims. The masses of the victim country have nothing to lose from getting rid of imperialism—except their chains and their poverty.

The Bahamas is just such a victim country. Its economy is dominated by imperialist investors, and its government is a puppet of imperialist interests. Furthermore, the Bahamas has its own distinctive role to play within the imperialist system, a role determined by its own particular history and features.

Up to the present, the Bahamas has not been an important source of raw materials, so that it has not served this function. And a number of factors have prevented its being a profitable place to invest in factories or other productive facilities. It has, of course, provided a market for imperialist countries, since everything must be imported. But its major role has been to act as a kind of "service station" for the capitalist industrial and financial system.

With the full cooperation of the Bay Street Boys and their PLP successors, international capital has used the Bahamas for its own limited purposes. So instead of building an industrial and agricultural economy, the productive capacity of the country has actually been destroyed in order to concentrate on those few services demanded by the imperialist economic system.

Imperialist countries, such as the U.S.A., England, and Germany, need large government revenues to support their large armies, to maintain roads and other facilities and to provide some social services for their workers who have come to expect at least some such services. To provide this revenue, they need large taxes, although much of the tax is paid not by wealthy capitalists, but by working people.

But while they need such taxes at home, the financial giants of these countries also find it very convenient and profitable to have a neutral country in which to conduct their business in secrecy and with complete freedom from taxation. In the Bahamas, they have found politicians and businessmen, such as Stafford Sands and Lynden Pindling, who are happy to provide a tax-free atmosphere, the only condition being that their own pockets are kept full.

Similarly, the development of the Bahamas as a resort and tourism center serves well the interests of international capital. An island paradise free of all taxation and regulation, where government officials can be easily bought off, not only offers pleasant relaxation for U.S., British or German millionaires, but it provides a place to invest extra cash with little risk and a high rate of return.

In the Bahamas, as in any capitalist country, a few people own the wealth and the sources of wealth, while the many people who labour do without. But the historically developed role of the Bahamas in the world economy makes the position of the masses particularly hopeless. In the United States, for example, there is a highly industrialized and productive economy which is owned by a few, but in which there is so much wealth that at least a small portion of it trickles down to the workers. In

the Bahamas, on the contrary, the economy is almost wholly unproductive and based on selling a few services. But what is worse is that even those few services are sold only by promising foreign investors that it will cost them next to nothing to do business. So what has been created is an economy which produces nothing and generates almost no revenue. It is an economy which cannot even provide work for most people, or pay a decent wage to those who do find work. The Bahamians are a poor people, with a poor government and a poor and unproductive economy. Only Bay Street merchants, real estate investors, and hustling politicians can profit from such a miserable order of things.

The PLP and the official "opposition" parties, the BDP/FNM, are simply neocolonial puppets, and as a result their only program is one of intensifying the role of our country within the imperialist system. They know nothing to do except look for still more foreign investors, sell still more of our land to foreign speculators, and try to attract more banks. They talk about a program of "Bahamianization," but this really means nothing more than trying to provide a few more opportunities for wealthy and upper middle class Bahamians, who are already doing pretty well. And in any case, it is no more than a token program which does nothing to put the real economy in Bahamian hands.

For the masses they have no program at all. They have no program to develop the kind of broad-based and productive economy that could provide jobs for our people. Their meagre plans for the development of agriculture and fishing are a joke and will leave us importing most of our food forever. And perhaps most important, they are not even considering a system of taxes that could put some of the wealth of the country at the service of the Bahamian people.

There is no solution to our problem, so long as we continue to play the role we have been given in the imperialist system. Foreign investors come to this country to make a fast dollar with no risk and no taxes. They are not going to invest heavily in agriculture or fishing, since that would require a large investment and would not offer quick and sure profits. They will come only so long as they are promised no taxes and no regulation by the government. They are happy to buy up our land, to set up hotels and casinos free of taxes, and to conduct their banking business without any regulation. But it would be foolish to think that they will ever act in a responsible way to develop the economy of the Bahamas.

As a backwater of international capitalism, the Bahamas has developed a mode of production which is really a mode of non-production. It is an economy in which a few merchants, politicians, and entrepreneurs sell services to the giants of the capitalist world by offering them bargain rates. But somebody has to pay the price for those bargain rates, and it is the masses who pay. The road we are traveling is a dead end.

C. The Socialist Alternative

The past history of the Bahamas is a heavy weight which holds our people down and leads us to accept oppression. Our country was born as a colony, and we have always been dominated by European and American powers. Because of this, some of our people have actually come to believe that we *need* foreign domination in order to survive. And the PLP cashes in on the ignorance of our people. Their strategy is to convince the people that we have no choice but to continue on our present course. In fact, they don't even bother to come up with serious programs, since they count on the people accepting the present system as the only possibility.

But *there is an alternative*, and it lies in building *socialism* in the Bahamas. A socialist Bahamas could develop a productive economy able to meet many of our needs. It could provide meaningful work for all our people. It could put all the wealth and resources of our country at the service of meeting human needs. And it could instill in our people the pride and hope that can come when we are in charge of our own destiny. Given the rape of our country over so many centuries, the task of construction would not be easy. Hard work and sacrifice would be necessary. But a united Bahamian people could build a democratic socialist society which would offer a real future for ourselves and our children. Socialism is being built in many countries of the world today. In fact, the building of socialism in the world is the most important feature of the world today. Therefore, we are not talking about some utopian dream, but about a practical program which is being developed in many areas.

Socialism has two main aspects, one economic and the other political, although the two go together and cannot exist apart. From the economic point of view, socialism means that the major means of production of the society are taken out of the hands of a few rich capitalists and foreign investors and placed in the hands of the people as public property. So in our country, the hotels and casinos, the import trade, the land, refineries, mines and quarries and other sources of wealth would belong to all the people. Those which, for any reason, are allowed to remain in private hands would be closely regulated and heavily taxed, to be sure that the bulk of their profits go to the people, not to a few investors. In this way, the resources of our country will not only benefit the masses, but be used in a planned and rational way to meet our most pressing needs.

The political meaning of socialism is that political power passes into the hands of the working people of the country. That is to say, the state and all its agencies are no longer under the control of the wealthy ruling class, but of the labouring class, on whose backs the country has been built. Instead of merely voting for one or another ruling-class puppet every five years, the masses control the government and directly participate in all decisions. The police, the military, the courts and all other

institutions come under popular control. Only when the state is a workers' state can the economy be controlled by the state for the benefit of the masses. So political control is the necessary condition for economic justice.

In every capitalist country, the wealth is controlled by a small class, and the state is an instrument of that class. And in that sense, the workers of every country have a similar need to take control of the economy and the state. But in the Bahamas, socialist transformation is a pressing necessity. Some capitalist countries at least have a developed and productive economy which is growing and expanding. But here we have nothing of the sort. We have a stagnant, service-oriented and non-productive economy, so that our situation is growing steadily worse. In our country, the working class not only has to take over the economy, but we have to build a new economy. The present ruling class is getting rich not by developing our country, but by pushing it deeper into underdevelopment.

Socialism is not simply one alternative for the Bahamas. It is the *only* alternative. The Bahamas cannot and must not remain locked into its present role in the world economic system. There must be a genuinely productive economy—based on agriculture and fishing, but including tourism and industry as well—an economy that can meet basic human needs and employ all our people in expanding social wealth. The resources of our country must be employed for national development and human welfare. We need rational planning to develop a balanced economy and an all-out effort to break the chains of economic dependency. The only other choice is continued stagnation, domination, and poverty.

The Vanguard Party is committed to building socialism in the Bahamas. This is not because we happen to like socialist ideas. It is because socialism means justice and a decent life for all our people. It means that power belongs to the people. It means hope for the future. It means an end to privilege, an end to foreign domination, an end to great wealth existing alongside mass poverty. This is the struggle we face, and this is the goal to which we of the Vanguard have dedicated our energies, our intelligence, and our very lives.

Notes

¹ *The People*, January 5, 1974. This was a PLP newspaper.

² See, for example, the speech by PLP Chairman, Hubert Ingraham, reported in *The Nassau Guardian*, July 2, 1977.

³ John M. Bryden, *Tourism and Development: A Case Study of the Commonwealth Caribbean* (Cambridge University Press, 1973).

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 217.

⁵ Walter Rodney, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa* (Howard University Press, 1972), pp. 4-5.

Chapter 4

The Vanguard Party and its Program

As surely as the spring rains bring flowers, the oppression of a people brings resistance. Because of centuries of oppression, the Bahamian people rose up to destroy the old UBP of the Bay Street Boys and to put the government in the hands of Pindling and the PLP. In doing this, the people brought an end to a regime based on the privilege of skin color, and they hoped that a majority government would be an instrument to serve the needs of the people.

Now more than a dozen years later, the record is clear. The PLP is a party of Judas goats who have led our people down the road to ruin. They have crawled into bed with the Bay Street merchants and foreign investors, and they have long forgotten the masses from which they rose. Now once again, the people are realizing that their oppression has not been alleviated, that it has in fact intensified. And so the resistance of the masses is gathering force once again, this time on a deeper level and with much greater understanding.

The Vanguard Nationalist and Socialist Party is the organized expression of the rising consciousness of the Bahamian masses. A party such as the Vanguard can come into existence, endure and develop only when concrete material conditions call for it. An enduring political party is always the expression and representative of class forces and class interests in a society. The UBP and, after it, the BDP/FNM are expressions of the merchant interests of the old ruling class, though this opposition is continually feuding and splitting. The PLP is the expression and representative of the new ruling class which has forced the Bay Street Boys to share the power and wealth which come from oppression of the working people.

By this same measure, the Vanguard Party is the expression and representative of the working class, the labouring masses, and those excluded from political and economic participation in the society today. The Vanguard draws its membership from the working class. But more importantly, it draws its support wholly from the working class, and can endure only because it articulates and represents the interests of the working class.

Because the PLP symbolized the struggle for nationalism and against the racism of the UBP, it has been able to enjoy a long "honeymoon" with the Bahamian people. Pindling has done all he can to identify the PLP with blackness in the minds of the people. He tries to portray himself as a "boy from the blocks," and he continues to peddle his image as the grocer's son dedicated to the liberation of his "brothers and sisters." He describes the PLP not as a party, but as an institution, as

the very expression of Black Pride.¹ Even today some Bahamians continue to defend the PLP fanatically, no matter how much they must fly in the face of reality, just because they so identify the PLP with blackness that they see any criticism as a personal attack.

But this kind of blind allegiance cannot be sustained indefinitely by a group of neocolonial hustlers such as the PLP. For a long time now, most of the Bahamian people have recognized that the PLP is just a new set of bandits, that it has no viable program for the nation, and that the future looks bleak. There is little love today for Pindling or the PLP, and it is not genuine loyalty that maintains the PLP in power.

The PLP has managed to hold onto power because of two basic factors. The first of these is a fear that the defeat of the PLP might mean a return to power by the Bay Street Boys. The Vanguard Party has stated this clearly in its analysis of the 1977 election:

What made the PLP victory so decisive, was that criticism of its atrocious governmental performance over the past ten years, as well as its major opposition, came from parties that in one way or another, the majority of the voters identified with the hated UBP. This was especially true of the BDP. Just the chance that the BDP would come to power and bring back "Pop" Symonette and the Boys was all that in this politically unsophisticated society the PLP needed to divert attention from its terrible governmental record.²

So until recently, the fear of reaction drove the people into the PLP camp. But the smashing victory of the PLP in the 1977 election has, in this sense, weakened the PLP position. It is now clear that the UBP is dead and will never rise again. The black majority will have a majority government, and there will be no return to the past. Therefore, the attention of the people is now shifting to the "atrocious governmental performance" of the PLP itself.

The second factor that the PLP counts on to cling to power is the political ignorance and passivity of the masses. Once again, we quote the Vanguard Election Analysis:

Due to centuries of Bay Street colonialism and ten years of PLP neocolonialism, the literacy level of our people is low, they are poorly informed on both local and international issues, and they are not disciplined. As a result of such ignorance and ill discipline, Bahamians rarely listen to issues, are flippant about most matters, however serious, and they see politics as a game of hustle, as to which of the politicians they can hustle quickest and for the most. This played right into the hands of the PLP. . . . As a result of all this, it was painful for Vanguard people to go through these communities and find people who wanted money, "t-shirts," favours, liquors, community parties, etc., for even the chance that they would consider voting for you. The PLP in the last stages of the election far surpassed the major opposition in meeting these demands. . . .

For three hundred years and more, the vast majority of Bahamians have been excluded completely from any voice in the affairs of their country. The British imperialists made no bones about their belief that our people were incapable of any form of self-government. They said

that "it is an undoubted fact that where the white race is dominant there the black man has made the greatest cultural progress."⁴ And while the PLP leaders are mostly black men themselves, they have kept alive the attitude that the masses are not fit to participate in the decisions that affect their lives. So they will show up at election time to pass out petty bribes, while never coming into the community or listening to the people between elections.

But once again, the steady deterioration of the economic and social condition of the people is making them more conscious. And as their awareness grows, this cheap strategy of the PLP is becoming obsolete. The people are every day better able to deal with "politics by pay-off." And once this strategy is exhausted, the PLP has no genuine program to fall back on.

It is in this situation that the Vanguard Party has emerged as the only genuine opposition and as the leadership of the future. This has been recognized many times by both Bahamian and foreign observers, by diplomats, and even by Pindling himself. It is the Vanguard that will provide the leadership for the future of our country. The political awakening of the Bahamian people is measured by their growing support for Vanguard. The Bahamian people know today that only the Vanguard is committed to a life-and-death struggle to bring an end to neocolonial and imperialist domination and to place both economic and political power in the hands of the working people of our country. It is now a matter of time. The PLP may survive the election of 1982. But the day is surely not far off when the neocolonial PLP is cast into the dustbin of history, alongside the colonial UBP.

In this final chapter, we want to look briefly at the historical development of the Vanguard Party. Then we will conclude by examining the Ten Point Program of the Vanguard, in the light of the analysis of the Bahamian situation as developed in the preceding chapters.

A. Development of the Vanguard Party

The Vanguard Party has itself passed through the successive phases that the working class as a whole is now passing through in becoming more aware of the realities of Bahamian life. Vanguard was born in 1971. It developed out of the youth group, Unicomm, which was formed in the late 1960s as a forum for discussion among youth who were becoming politically active.

By 1970, Unicomm was divided and reflected the competing class interests and contradictions in the larger society. There were some who saw a future for themselves in ruling-class politics and were prepared to join the PLP and align Unicomm with the Pindling group. Others were aware that the PLP was not living up to the promises it had made in 1967, but they believed that the PLP could still be saved, and favored keeping Unicomm as an independent organization which would nonetheless give critical support to the PLP.

Only a very few of the most far-sighted and dedicated Unicom members were able to see that the PLP had totally betrayed the Bahamian people and that the only hope lay in forming a new party to represent the masses and to challenge the rule of the PLP. This was not an easy decision, since the PLP was strengthening its hold on the country. Pindling was able to promise substantial rewards to those loyal to him, just as he was able to promise punishment for those who turned against him. And those who broke from Pindling to form the Vanguard Party were among the brightest and most promising young Bahamians, who could have been assured of wealth and position by remaining in the PLP fold. Nonetheless, for these workers and intellectuals, it was clear that they could not serve two masters. No one could serve both the people and the PLP. They made their choice.

From the beginning, the Vanguard was characterized by the honesty and integrity of its leadership and by a determination to bring genuine power to the masses. While the party advocated a type of "Bahamian socialism," it was not at first guided by the principles of scientific socialism. Their quarrel was not with the PLP's emphasis on "Black Power," but was based precisely on the failure of the PLP to put genuine power into the hands of the people. At this stage, the Vanguard correctly saw the PLP as a group of hustlers who had fooled the people with talk of majority but in fact deprived them of real power. However, the Vanguard did not yet see the issue clearly in terms of *class struggle*. They saw Pindling and his cohorts as bandits, but did not yet understand their role as neocolonial puppets or as representatives of a new ruling class which had declared war on Bahamian workers, even while posing as champions of the masses. Consequently, at this early stage, the Vanguard became the foremost advocate of genuine "Black Power," and their literature quoted most freely from advocates of black nationalism, such as Marcus Garvey and Stokely Carmichael.⁵

Though the Vanguard could not become a mass party during the years that the PLP was consolidating its power and enjoying broad popular support, it nonetheless won the allegiance of the most serious and committed youth of the nation. As a result, by 1974, it could be reported that "to aware black youths, it is the only real party."⁶

As the party grew as a factor in Bahamian political life, its leaders were subjected to harassment and oppression. They found that no work was available to them. Those who had businesses of their own found their creditors demanding immediate payment. And the Chairman of the Vanguard, Dr. John McCartney, was denied even the courtesy of an interview when he applied for the position of Principal of the College of the Bahamas. This despite the fact that he was easily the most qualified candidate. (The government was finally forced to hire a less-qualified person from Guyana, because no suitable Bahamian could be found.)

During these early years of growth and struggle, as the Vanguard worked in the community, the search went on for a more adequate understanding of the society and its workings. And as they practiced

and studied, Vanguard members came to realize that nationalism was inadequate either as a theory to explain Bahamian society or as a strategy for future development. They came to see that it was, in the last analysis, class interest and not color alone that determined the political and economic direction of society. They realized more clearly each day that the continued oppression of the masses was not due to mere banditry, but to a *system* of oppression. They saw that this system worked to enhance the interests of a small ruling class and to crush the working masses, whether the system was headed by black rulers or white. In short, as they struggled for the liberation of their people, they realised that the only adequate theory to guide their action was the scientific socialist position. They saw that this theory was guiding the struggles of oppressed peoples in Africa, Asia and Latin America, and they sought to apply it to Bahamian conditions.

The Vanguard moved beyond a struggle against the symptoms of social disorder and attacked the disease at the root of that disorder. The party recognised that an overemphasis on nationalism "blinds one to the pervasiveness of capitalism and imperialism from which the class differences and antagonisms ultimately stem in the first place." In other words, nationalism by itself "ignores the fact that within racial groups there are classes whose relationships to the means of production differ in very concrete ways." And so it concluded that genuine liberation could not be won until the working-class majority was in full control of the means of production and resources of the nation.⁷

In this way, through constant work in the community, through persistent study and analysis, and through honest self-criticism and openness to the truth, the Vanguard developed into a fully mature, self-conscious party of the working class, firmly grounded in scientific socialism. And it is now completely and definitively distinguished from all other parties on the Bahamian political scene, not only because of its honesty and deeper analysis, but because it is the *only* party that articulates and represents the interests of the working-class majority. In the words of our Vice-Chairman, Comrade Lionel Carey:

One of the basic things about Vanguard which makes it so distinct from the other parties is that the Vanguard sees the problems in the community today as a class struggle, a struggle between the masses of poor, working class people and the few people who have benefited traditionally from the wealth of the community. And this is the point we are trying to get across: the other parties we see representing the kind of interests that have exploited the community all along. In this sense, they're not a choice. The Vanguard Party we see as the only choice and the only chance that the people still have.⁸

We of the Vanguard thus see the PLP for what it is, an instrument of neocolonial domination; and we see the opposition BDP/FNM as representing only a different sector of that same ruling class. We see that the fundamental problem lies in an economic system that perpetuates class rule, and we call for an end to that economic system

and the establishment of a just and humane socialist system controlled by the working masses. As Chairman McCartney has so often said, "Vanguard is the *only* political party fighting for an end to economic oppression, fighting against capitalism and neocolonialism."

To be a party of the people, it is not enough to say that a party represents the masses. The party must be an actual weapon of the masses, articulating their needs and demands and struggling untiringly for their interests. In a class-divided society, no party can speak for all classes. Those who serve the interests of the rich who profit from the present economic system must of necessity work against the interests of the poor and oppressed masses. And the neocolonial PLP can no more serve the working-class majority in Bahamian society than could the old UBP. Only the Vanguard is a workers' party today, and the political awakening of the Bahamian working class is measured by the strength and militancy of their support for the Vanguard.

B. The Ten Point Program of the Vanguard Party

Shortly after its founding in 1971, the Vanguard Party first formulated its Ten Point Program. While conditions have changed in some minor respects since that time, the Program remains an excellent general statement of the principles that should guide the building of a democratic and socialist Bahamas. Therefore, we may use it as the basis of a general discussion of the platform of the Vanguard Party.

Since we are here offering only a brief introductory analysis, it is not possible to enter into a detailed discussion of programs and policies to be pursued. And in any case, detailed programs must always be adapted to the particular historical and material conditions of the time, so that they cannot be stipulated in advance. The very heart of scientific socialism is the concrete analysis of concrete conditions and the formulation of action programs based on concrete analysis. What we can provide is a statement of the basic principles which guide the Vanguard Party and a discussion of those principles in the light of the historical experience of the Bahamian people.

We begin with a statement of the entire Ten Point Program:

VANGUARD PARTY TEN POINT PROGRAM

1. WE BELIEVE in *independence*, but insist that this independence must involve not simply the changing to flags and symbols of our own. This type of independence has eventuated in a legal and constitutional farce. Rather we believe that with independence, the complete restructuring of our whole society along more democratic and egalitarian lines must come.
2. WE BELIEVE in *religious toleration*, by which we mean the right of every individual to worship as he or she believes, as long as the form of worship does not interfere with the rights of others.

3. WE ENCOURAGE *Bahamianization of religion*, by which we mean (a) Bahamian control of the churches and (b) a church that reflects the Bahamian way of life.
4. WE BELIEVE in the *socialization of the means of production*, by which we mean an economy that is owned and controlled by Bahamians—free of foreign control—and an economy in which Bahamians receive a just proportion of the natural wealth of the country.
5. WE BELIEVE in *meaningful checks and balances in our political system*, by which we mean a government system in which the representatives are at all times under the control of the people. We see the right of referendum and recall as a means of doing this.
6. WE BELIEVE in *effective local government*—government on a local level—which encourages full and meaningful participation of the Bahamian people.
7. WE BELIEVE in *mass education* of all levels in a Bahamian context, by which we mean that our country can develop its human and natural resources to the fullest and instill a spirit of patriotism into our people only if Bahamian citizens have the right to education at all levels and of all types. Until such an educational system is devised, talk of nationalism is meaningless.
8. WE BELIEVE that an educational system that will prepare the citizens to cope with everyday problems should have the following characteristics:
 - (a) a system of vocational training
 - (b) a stress on academics but an even greater stress on learning by doing. We cannot neglect the academics; however, let us bear in mind that learning by doing is one of the greatest ways of releasing the creative energies of our people
 - (c) the encouragement of mobility of labour and self help.
9. WE BELIEVE in a *culture* that recognizes and promotes the experience of all groups in society, by which we mean that in the past in our country, one set of cultural experiences, the Western European, has been the criterion by which all other experiences have been judged, eventuating in a feeling of self hate. We feel that such a condition has stifled the development of our people, and it is only by encouraging a cultural pluralism that our creative energies can be released.
10. WE BELIEVE in and *support the struggles of oppressed people* throughout the world, especially the people who are struggling against colonialism and imperialism.

We can now use this historic document to enter into a general discussion of the most basic issues facing our nation today. We will divide our discussion into seven basic topics. Some of these topics correspond with only one point of the program, while others correspond with more than one. The topics are the following:

- (1) Independence
- (2) Religion and Religious Freedom
- (3) Socialization of the Means of Production
- (4) Politics and Government

- (5) Education
- (6) Culture
- (7) Internationalism

Within this framework, we can address those issues that we believe are of greatest importance and concern to the Bahamian people today.

C. Vanguard's Stand on the Basic Issues

(1) Independence

Point 1. WE BELIEVE in *independence*, but insist that this independence must involve not simply the changing of flags and symbols of our own. This type of independence has eventuated in a legal and constitutional farce. Rather we believe that with independence, the complete restructuring of our whole society along more democratic and egalitarian lines must come.

Since the first drafting of the Ten Point Program, the "legal and constitutional farce" has been played out to the end. The Bahamas now has its own flag and symbols, its own ruling class, its own corrupt politicians and government "leaders." Looking at the political and legal structure, no one could deny that the Bahamas is now an "independent" nation.

There is no need to point out again that this facade of independence is indeed a farce. By now this must be obvious. The economy of the country is under the complete control of foreign capital. Government officials are bought and sold cheap by international financiers, gamblers and industrialists. Even the culture of the country is largely dominated by the latest U.S. fads in everything from pop music to hair conditioners.

The real question is not whether the Bahamas is independent—clearly it is not. The only important question is whether the country *can* be independent. That is, is it even realistic to talk about genuine independence? Or is this nation doomed to a future that will duplicate its past, a future of subordination and dependence on the forces of imperialism?

Although they never express it in this way, the answer we are given every day by the politicians of the PLP/BDP/FNM and the ruling class they represent is that our country can never be really independent. They tell us that our only hope is *more* dependence, not less, meaning more foreign investment and more cultural domination. And this has been said so often and for so long that many Bahamians have accepted it as a fact. Since the country has been controlled by imperialism for four hundred years, many people have become convinced that unless we allow this domination to continue, we will simply shrivel up and die.

Of all the parties in the country, only the Vanguard insists that true independence is possible and demands that it be achieved. This is why, in spite of the coming of political and legal independence and the end of

direct colonialism, the Vanguard still retains this demand as a first principle of our Ten Point Program.

Is the Vanguard engaged in nothing more than a pipe dream? Can it be that all the other parties, investors, and businessmen are wrong? Is true independence an empty hope? Is the Vanguard deceiving the people by demanding the impossible?

These are important questions. If we are indeed doomed to a future of helpless dependence, it is better to know it now, and we should not fool ourselves. But by the same token, if the Vanguard is correct in holding that independence can be achieved, then the most urgent task facing our people is to fight for true independence, autonomy and national dignity.

Before we can decide on the possibility of independence, however, we must first discuss the proper *meaning* of independence. Because in fact, there are a number of types of independence, and there is no way to achieve one of these types without the others.

First of all, there is, of course, *political* independence or legal independence. This comes when a country is recognized internationally as a national unit with its own government and laws. This kind of independence the Bahamas received in 1973. It is this legal independence, and this alone, that is celebrated on July 10 each year.

But there are other forms of independence as well, and the Bahamas is not in a position to celebrate any of these. There are, for example, *economic* independence, *military* independence, *cultural* independence, and *ideological* independence. And until all of these are won and consolidated, mere legal independence will continue to be a farce, as described by the Ten Point Program. So we must examine each of these in turn.

The issue of *economic* independence will be more fully discussed under section (3) below. But some preliminary remarks are appropriate at this point. The present ruling class and its parties, the PLP/BDP/FNM, are fond of claiming that the Bahamas can never achieve economic independence. If by independence is meant total self-sufficiency, then we must agree. No nation can be totally self-sufficient, and all must trade for goods that cannot be produced at home. Indeed, every nation is to some extent vulnerable to economic pressures over which it has little or no control. This is true even of large nations, such as the United States of America or the USSR, and it is even more true of small nations such as the Bahamas. Thus we must understand economic independence in relative terms, as a question of greater or lesser independence, but never of absolute independence.

What we reject categorically is willingness of the present government to continue in a condition of *total and helpless dependence*. At the present time, the Bahamian economy is almost completely parasitic and non-productive. Our country and its people depend for their very survival on the whims of external forces. If a few foreign investors should pull out or if the flow of tourists should slow down significantly, the im-

pact on the present economy would be *disastrous*. Since we are not now able even to feed our people, we are at the mercy of those who supply the food. And since we have no exports and are confined to selling only one luxury service—tourism—our only source of income can be cut off at a moment's notice.

This situation is intolerable, and it will have to be remedied before we can think of gaining control over our resources to meet the needs of our people. And yet the policies of the PLP/BDP/FNM agree in being committed to maintaining our present condition as helpless victims. It is in this context that we demand an all-out drive for economic independence.

The achievement of a high degree of economic independence requires a number of related steps:

- (1) the development of an economy that can meet many of the most basic needs of the people from its own resources;
- (2) the diversification of the economy to meet a range of needs and to provide a variety of commodities for foreign trade;
- (3) the development of a wider range of economic relations with many nations, in order to avoid undue reliance on any one nation or bloc of nations.

These goals can be pursued in a number of ways, and the path we follow must depend on our particular historical situation. But we can learn a great deal from similar attempts that have been made by developing nations of Africa, Asia, and even here in the Caribbean.

The first and most obvious step is to bring the economy under the control of the Bahamian people and their government, so that rational planning and coordinated strategies can be adopted. So long as a few foreign investors and the local ruling class own and control the major resources, means of production, and sources of revenue, there is no hope of launching a comprehensive program of economic independence. The wealth and economic potential of the country belong properly to the Bahamian people.

Over the levers of the economy are in Bahamian hands, other steps can be taken. A sizeable portion of public revenues can be diverted to build a strong and stable base of agriculture and fishing, so that we are largely able to feed our people, whatever may happen. Small industries can be built to produce some basic goods and to create additional exports. The tourism base can be expanded by encouraging tourists from East European, Asian, and Latin American countries, as well as from the U.S., Canada, Britain, Germany, etc. Friendly relations can be established with all countries so as to provide new trading partners and sources of economic assistance. Finally, it is vital that we foster a much greater degree of cooperation and mutual assistance among Caribbean nations. And a systematic planning apparatus can be set up to maintain and foster a balanced economy.

While it is impossible to predict precisely which policies should be

adopted until the situation actually arises, two things can be stated with certainty. One is that until we abandon the do-nothing course of the PLP/BDP/FNM and adopt the general direction indicated above, we can have no hope of economic independence. And the other is that until we achieve a much greater degree of economic independence, the needs of the Bahamian people will continue to be subordinated to the needs of outside forces.

We turn now to the question of *military* independence. Of course, the Vanguard Party joins with most of the people of the world in hoping that the need for military defence will never arise and that the Bahamas can live in peace and friendship with all nations. This is our desire and it is the declared policy of the Vanguard to seek excellent relations with all countries and to pursue a peaceful resolution of any conflicts that may arise.

Nonetheless, we cannot ignore the issue of military independence merely because we wish to live in peace. A nation that is unable to defend itself, that believes it is helpless before the designs of foreign powers or reactionary groups, is a nation that gives up all hope of securing genuine freedom and self-determination for its people. Precisely because we do seek peace, we cannot ignore the question of military independence.

It may seem inappropriate to talk about military independence in the case of a tiny nation such as the Bahamas. A mere quarter of a million people scattered over many islands and living in the shadow of the greatest military power in the history of the world—how can such a nation think of military independence?

The answer is that military independence lies not in material force alone, but lies above all in the *unity and will of the people*. If recent history teaches us nothing else, it teaches that a united people with a clear consciousness of their purpose constitute the most powerful force on earth. The people of Vietnam, of Cuba, of China, of Grenada, of Zimbabwe, and elsewhere, have triumphed over far superior firepower because of their unity, discipline and commitment. The lesson is clear.

An even more important lesson may be that the unity and will of a people are themselves the greatest *deterrent* to aggressive action. Even great powers hesitate to flex their muscle if they know that they will be met by the unshakeable determination of a people to defend their country.

When we discuss military independence, therefore, we are talking about much more than the need to build and equip an armed militia. Well-trained and well-equipped armed forces are certainly necessary. But above all, we must have two other ingredients: (1) a country that belongs to the people and so deserves their loyalty; and (2) a united people, conscious of their unity and their destiny and determined to brook no outside interference with their freedom and self-determination. Military independence requires that we build a society that is a genuine expression of the popular will. It is a question of putting real power into

the hands of the working class and of building revolutionary consciousness. And it is a question of building an economic and political system that serves the needs of the people and so deserves their loyalty. So we see that military independence can in no way be separated from economic independence, cultural independence, and ideological independence, the only basis on which national security can be built.

Turning now to the issue of *cultural* independence, we can easily see that it is closely related to the other forms of independence. We can never build the kind of unity and consciousness that we need among our people, so long as we remain culturally dependent on the U.S. and Britain. Until our cultural heritage is revived and emphasized, our people will lack a sense of common identity, common purpose and common struggle. So long as our needs and tastes are determined by U.S. advertising, we will never develop the economic independence essential to our survival and progress. We must develop political forms that are tailored to our history and our needs, rather than simply copying the British model. And we must develop new and more cooperative forms of economic life, based on the communal culture we have developed through centuries of slavery and oppression. The competitive individualism fostered by Western European and American culture is not only alien to the cultural background of our people, but is completely inappropriate for the cooperative effort we must have to build our nation.

In these and many other ways, it is essential that we break the cultural stranglehold imposed by slavery and colonialism. We have to recover a genuine Bahamian culture and instill a deep pride in our history of creative struggle. It goes without saying that we want to learn all that is useful from other cultures. There is much of value in Western European and American culture, and we need to explore and learn from our deep African heritage. But our own situation can never be adapted to these models. We are a distinctive people, with a distinctive history, geography, and tradition. We have had enough of leaders who do their best to look, act, talk and think like British barristers or U.S. executives. Those who would lead our people must "return to the source" of Bahamian culture. They must regain a sense of Bahamian reality, and they must live among the working people and learn from them. Only in this way can they give voice to the aspirations of the people.

Finally, what has been said of cultural independence can be extended to the issue of *ideological* independence. Ideology can never be separated from the concrete reality to which it is applied. The Vanguard Party is committed to the building of a socialist Bahamas, because only socialism can solve the problems of Bahamian society and give a positive direction to the nation. But this does not mean that the Vanguard is bound by any narrow dogma or model. The socialism we advocate is a *scientific* socialism, one rooted in the Bahamian experience and responsive to Bahamian needs.

Politicians of the PLP/BDP/FNM often say that the Bahamian people are "by nature" capitalists. That is complete and utter nonsense, especially since the Bahamian masses have never been anything other than oppressed victims of capitalism. But it would also be a mistake to say that the people are "by nature" socialists. Bahamians are a people with their own history, facing special and particular problems. We need an ideology that grows out of our own struggle and that can give direction to that struggle in the future.

The principles of the so-called "free enterprise" capitalist ideology have not served the needs of our people. But it would also be foolish to model ourselves after the ideology of China, the USSR, Cuba, Angola, or any other country. As in the area of culture, we have to examine the ideologies of other peoples and study how their ideologies have served their needs. But when all is said and done, we have no choice but to return to our own problems and deal with them creatively. Only in this way will we build a Bahamian socialism worthy of the name.

To sum up this section, then, the first demand of the Vanguard Party is for genuine independence. This must encompass political, economic, military, cultural and ideological independence. To suppose that we can be independent politically, while remaining economic victims and cultural imitators is to perpetuate a farce—and the name of that farce is the regime of the PLP/BDP/FNM. And finally, we emphasize that the single most important ingredient in independence is the unity and will of the people.

(2) Religion and Religious Freedom

Point 2. WE BELIEVE in *religious toleration*, by which we mean the right of every individual to worship as he or she believes, as long as the form of worship does not interfere with the rights of others.

Point 3. WE ENCOURAGE *Bahamianization of religion*, by which we mean (a) Bahamian control of the churches and (b) a church that reflects the Bahamian way of life.

By placing these points concerning religion near the top of the Ten Point Program, the Vanguard fully recognizes that religion has played and continues to play a major role in our society and in the lives of many Bahamians. It is therefore of the greatest importance that the position of the Vanguard on this issue be made crystal clear.

As the Program plainly states, the Vanguard Party fully supports the most complete freedom of religion. What is more important, the Vanguard Party is the only Bahamian party working to create a society that will realize the highest ideals of Christianity and the other great religions of the world. Since this is true, it goes without saying that the Vanguard Party regards true Christianity with warm friendship and has never spoken or acted against true Christianity.

But at the same time, the Vanguard will never hesitate to oppose those who betray the people and who use their church position to support a corrupt ruling class which exploits our people. The enemies of the people must be opposed, whether they wear a business suit or a preacher's robes. In fact, we believe that those who hide behind a pulpit in order to lie to the people and perpetuate injustice are among the most reprehensible and anti-Christian of men. And so while we favor complete religious toleration, we have little or no toleration for those who use the church as a weapon against the people.

Christianity has its roots in the teachings of Jesus Christ, a great revolutionary. His message was always in favor of the poor and oppressed. He sought no riches for himself, but served the people and spoke out against injustice, exploitation, and the degradation of human beings. He condemned those who lived in idle luxury, and he called upon the rich to follow him by giving all their wealth to the poor.

In the Acts of the Apostles, we are told that the earliest Christians followed these teachings. Those who had houses or land sold them and shared all that they had with their brothers and sisters. All possessions were held in common, and any Christian could use any of the goods of the community.

The Vanguard Party is the only party in this country calling for a realization of those Christian ideals. Only the Vanguard holds that the wealth of society must be shared to meet the needs of the people. No other party demands a good job for all at good pay, decent housing at low cost, and a more equal distribution of wealth. Only the Vanguard promises an end once and for all to exploitation, filth, poverty, crime, and special privilege. There is nothing Christian about riches and power for a few, alongside poverty and suffering for the many. And only the Vanguard is calling for a socialist society in which the resources of the land are used to meet the needs of the people.

Christian leaders have often been in the forefront of the struggle for justice. A man such as Martin Luther King, Jr., who gave his life in the struggle for justice and freedom for his people, was such a leader. In Cuba and Nicaragua, priests have fought and died in the struggle to end oppression and liberate their people. In our region, the Caribbean Council of Churches has also taken a firm stand for justice and human rights. The C.C.C. has supported the overthrow of the Gairy tyranny in Grenada and has spoken strongly against the repression of the Burnham government in Guyana. The General Secretary of the C.C.C., Rev. Roy Neehall, has written:

To be in solidarity with those who struggle for freedom, justice, love and peace is to be in a spiritual relation with those who seek the fullness of life as ordained by God.

And he goes on to call on churchmen to "take sides" in the revolutionary struggles that are sweeping the Caribbean.¹⁰

Now the question we must face is whether the church leaders of our country have lived up to these high ideals. And sadly we must admit that many of them have fallen far short. Indeed, we often find preachers consorting with those who are most determined to keep the masses in poverty and degradation. And it is among these charlatans and misleaders that we find the source of the attacks on the Vanguard as being "anti-Christian."

Let us emphasize that we are not talking about all the clergy of our country. There are some preachers who have a genuine concern for the people and who are willing to take a stand for justice. But a surprisingly high percentage of our preachers have proved only too willing to serve the exploiters. They have ignored the long record of inaction, indifference, and oppression of the ruling class, and they have given open support to the forces of backwardness.

After the 1977 election, there was no shortage of preachers willing to hold prayer meetings to give thanks for the victory of the PLP. Preachers have urged their congregations to support the PLP or BDP, while condemning those who might support the Vanguard. They have ignored the poverty and suffering of their people, and have been willing to lie in the most blatant way about what socialism means for the masses.

In a country where religion plays such a major role, clergymen have a special responsibility. Because of their influential position, it is especially important that they learn the truth and use the truth to serve the people. They should be models of a Christian life, and they should lead the struggle for social justice.

By this standard, our clergy has failed most miserably. They have refused to give support to the Caribbean Council of Churches in its search for freedom and dignity. They have failed to condemn injustice and poverty at home. They have endorsed a government that has corruption as its middle name. Far from living up to the Christian ideal of sharing, Bahamian preachers make on average *more than seven times* as much as the average Bahamian! And many of them have gotten wealthy on the offerings of the poor working people who depend on them for guidance.

The Vanguard has no hesitation about condemning this sort of greed and hypocrisy. Christianity has always been plagued by Pharisees and false prophets who use the cloak of religion to serve their own interests and the interests of corrupt rulers. And the Vanguard is honored to be attacked by such hypocrites.

The kind of church supported by the Vanguard is a church that serves the Bahamian people, a church rooted in Bahamian culture and responsive to the needs of the Bahamian masses. Religion is fundamentally a matter of the heart; it is the most personal spiritual experience. No political party should interfere with this experience or concern itself with personal religious life. But the church is also a public institution of

society. And the Vanguard will not stand idly by while the church is used as a tool of oppression and deception.

The Vanguard welcomes true Christians into its ranks, along with those of other faiths. And the party is eager to join with a church of the people in an alliance for a socialist Bahamas that can guarantee not only religious toleration, but full equality and dignity for all our people.

(3) Socialization of the Means of Production

Point 4. WE BELIEVE in *socialization of the means of production*, by which we mean an economy that is owned and controlled by Bahamians—free of foreign control—and an economy in which Bahamians receive a just proportion of the natural wealth of the country.

Socialization of the means of production is no more and no less than the economic expression of the principle that the Bahamas must belong to the people and must serve the people. The resources of the country belong properly to all the people, and the wealth of the country belongs to the masses who have worked to produce that wealth. The people therefore have a fundamental right to bring those resources and wealth under their control and to use them to serve their interests.

We emphasize that the purpose is to serve the people, because in this way we can expose some of the lies that are told about this issue. For example, people are sometimes told that under a socialist system, their house or car will be taken away from them. Or they are told that if they own two small houses, one will be taken. This is ridiculous, but even a ridiculous lie may be believed, if it is repeated often enough.

Working families have often laboured their whole lives and have almost nothing to show for it. Through their labour, they have indeed produced riches, but little of those riches have come to them. Often the only thing they have been able to acquire after years of work and saving is a small house without running water or other conveniences. Maybe if they are lucky, they have also managed to buy a second-hand car or maybe a second shack to rent out. Now how can anyone think that a socialist government, a people's government, would take from the people the little bit that they have laboured so long for? What kind of nonsense is that?

The personal possessions of the toiling masses belong to them, and there can be no question of disturbing those possessions. It is not socialists who rob the people of their wealth. The capitalist system has long since stolen the wealth of the people to enrich the local ruling class and foreign investors.

The poor man has a right to keep his shack, if he wants. The point is that he also has a right to much more. He has a right to guaranteed work at good pay. He has a right to *decent* housing, to clean and sanitary housing with plenty of room for himself and his family. He has a right to pure running water, to indoor plumbing, and an adequate system of sewerage and garbage disposal. All these things and more are his by right. Now let us ask again: who is really robbing the people.

Under a socialist system, the wealth of the people will be returned to serve the people, through a rational system of planning. If the poor man wants to keep his shack, he is welcome to do so. In that case, no one will take away his house, although he may be relieved of his mortgage. But the goal is not to let people keep their shacks. The goal is building new and better housing, the kind that most people will prefer to a shack. And along with good housing will come free, universal medical care, cheap transportation and high-quality education of all types to meet the needs of the nation.

How is it possible to accomplish all these things under a socialist system when none of them can be accomplished under the present system? The answer to this is, once more, socialization of the means of production.

Socialization of the means of production means that the people, through the state, take control of all major sources of wealth in the country, so that they can be used intelligently to meet public needs. When we speak of the major sources of wealth, we have in mind such things as large hotels, refineries, factories, banks, land, mines and quarries. In some cases, these enterprises and resources may come to be directly owned by the state, either through purchase or through direct expropriation. In many cases, the enterprise may remain in private hands, but with strict regulation and control of prices, wages and profits. Smaller businesses providing needed goods and services would almost always remain in private hands, though even in these cases, the state would watch closely to be sure that workers were treated fairly and that no excessive profits were taken from the people. At the same time, the state would use its resources to support those enterprises, whether large or small, that serve the national interest, and help insure that the small businessman is able to enjoy a secure income and maintain his business.

Socialization of the means of production makes it possible to achieve two goals which are never attainable under capitalism. First, because of central planning, it is possible to make an accurate judgment about what the needs of the people are and to allocate resources so as to meet needs in a rational way. And second, most of the wealth that has up to now been lost to foreign investors and a few rich Bahamians will become available to the people.

At the present time, there is little relationship between the needs of society and the way resources are used. Most of the wealth goes into the pockets of the wealthy or is sent abroad in the form of excess profits. Enormous amounts are spent building mansions at Lyford Cay or on Prospect Ridge. Millions go into yachts, limousines, and other luxury goods. Very little goes to the government for public use, and a large portion of what the government takes in is wasted. And through it all, there is a desperate need for housing, education, medical care, water supply, etc.

Socialization of the means of production is the resolution of this contradiction. Once the wealth of the country is under public control, decisions can be made about how it should be used. If E. P. Taylor or Lynden Pindling want a few million to build their mansions, they can make a request for the funds. But the people's power will decide whether those millions are needed to build a few mansions or whether they are needed to build good housing for working people. If the society needs better medical care or more schools, the money can be used for this purpose, rather than for yachts and limousines. In this way, needs can be matched to resources in a way hitherto undreamed of.

In any society, resources are limited. Not all projects can be undertaken at once, and there must be priorities set for the use of resources. Once again, the present system offers little way to do this. Since wealth is controlled by private individuals and corporations, each of which seeks only to make as much profit as possible, it is impossible to plan the economy as a whole in a rational way. If there is a bigger profit to be made quickly by building another casino, that is what will be done, even if what is really needed is investment in agriculture or fishing. Or if there is more profit in building luxury villas than in building low-rent housing for workers, then villas will be built and workers will go on living in shacks.

With socialization of the means of production, this kind of thing comes to an end. Through public discussion and investigation, it is determined which are the greatest needs and which have a lower priority. Resources are then allocated rationally to meet the greatest needs first and to meet others as additional funds become available.

It is really impossible to say just how much wealth would be gained for public use through socialization of the means of production. In this country, both the profits and the incomes of the rich are kept secret. But in order to get at least some rough idea, we can look at some figures for the year 1976.¹¹ In that year, the World Bank estimates that workers produced some \$765 million of new wealth, beyond what they were paid in wages. In other words, after paying all wages and costs of production, there was at least \$765 million in profit left over. And yet the government's total budget was a mere \$148 million. So it is easy to see that even at the production levels of that year, a socialist state could have increased the wages of workers by 30 percent to 40 percent, while at the same time increasing government revenue by at least 300 percent.

Actually, these estimates are much too low. For one thing, the level of productivity reflected by these figures is very low and could be improved greatly. But even more important is the fact that in 1976, at least 22 percent of workers were unemployed and so produced no wealth at all. But while capitalism always keeps many workers unemployed, socialism needs the efforts of all workers to secure welfare for all. By making work available to all, the resources of a socialist state would be dramatically increased.

So we can see that socialization of the means of production makes available to the people hundreds of millions of dollars each year, dollars that can be put to work to meet the pressing needs of the country. As a matter of mere dollars and cents, we simply cannot afford the luxury of a wasteful capitalist economy. Only socialism can recover the vast sums now being lost in waste and exorbitant profits for a few.

There is one final point to make on this issue. Up to now we have been discussing socialization primarily from an economic point of view, but it is just as important from a political and social point of view.

Under capitalism, the masses have virtually no voice in the vital economic decisions that affect their lives. The people are never consulted about what is produced or how it is produced. And in each business enterprise, all decisions are made by the owners and managers, with workers having little or nothing to say. The capitalist is concerned only to maximize his profit, and he does whatever will accomplish that goal. It makes no difference whether what he produces is socially useful. And it makes no difference what conditions workers must live in.

Socialism brings real democracy to economic life, and this transforms the whole quality of life. For example, before decisions are made about which are the most important priorities, there is full discussion throughout the country. In every neighborhood and every community, there can be meetings to discuss what is most needed. The results of these meetings are passed on to higher levels, and only after full discussion is a complete economic plan developed. And after a plan is developed, it is once again returned to the local level for criticism and alteration. After such a complete and democratic review, the plan is adopted and put into effect.

By the same token, democracy can be introduced into the workplace, which is, after all, where most people spend one-third of their time. Within each factory or hotel or business, workers can control most aspects of their work. For example, the workers in a hotel are the ones who know best how a hotel should be run. They can decide on hours of work, which jobs are to be done by whom, how to divide shifts and vacations, and many other things. They can also decide on how wages are to be divided, who will receive wages at various levels, etc. No doubt, workers will want expert advice in dealing with certain technical questions. And of course, the decisions of each enterprise must contribute to the total good of society. But in a workers' state, final decisions are made by workers.

Summing up: socialization of the means of production means both that enormously more money will be available to meet the needs of the masses and also that the use of resources can be planned and implemented in a rational way. It means that all economic activity will be guided by the criterion of human welfare, not by the all-consuming drive for profit. It means that a broad-based economy can be developed which will contribute to economic independence and employ resources

in the most effective way. Perhaps above all, it means that there will be a great democratization of economic life, that henceforth, the masses themselves will decide on the priorities of society and on how those priorities are to be dealt with.

None of this implies that socialization of the means of production will immediately solve all problems. As a long-time victim of colonialism and imperialism, the Bahamas will face great economic problems for years to come. It will take years to develop a strong and viable economy. The material needs of our people are great, and it will take time to provide housing, health care, education, and the rest. Assistance from international sources will be needed if we are to move forward in a number of areas. All this is obvious.

But only through socialization of the means of production can we even put ourselves in a position to *begin* national construction and economic development. There can be no progress until the resources of the country are available to the people. And there can be no hope for justice and freedom, so long as most people are helpless victims of economic injustice. Socialization of the means of production is the fundamental first step, without which the Bahamas faces the certainty of a future of oppression and backwardness.

(4) Politics and Government

Point 5. WE BELIEVE in *meaningful checks and balances in our political system*, by which we mean a government system in which the representatives are at all times under the control of the people. We see the right of referendum and recall as a means of doing this.

Point 6. WE BELIEVE in *effective local government*—government on a local level—which encourages full and meaningful participation of the Bahamian people.

The presently existing political system is called a democracy by those who benefit from it. But it is in fact the very opposite of everything a democracy should be. So one of the first tasks of a socialist government will be to create a genuinely democratic system. Democracy, after all, means government by the people, and it is just such a democracy that will be built by the Vanguard Party.

It is impossible to separate the question of political power and democracy from the question of economic power. Under the present system, all wealth and economic power are controlled by a small ruling class. And political power is in the hands of that same class. Even though some of these people are "elected" in the technical sense, the realities of political life quickly reveal this process as a sham and a farce.

To begin with, very few Bahamians are able to participate in the present system. A deposit of \$400 is required even to become a candidate. This already makes it very difficult for anyone to run who does not have the backing of wealthy interests. A workers' party such as the

Vanguard must make a titanic effort just to come up with the deposit, since to challenge for all thirty-eight seats in the House of Assembly requires raising \$15,200.

But coming up with the deposit of money is only the least obstacle facing anyone who would challenge the ruling class. The politicians of the PLP/BDP/FNM have virtually unlimited funds to secure their election. Gangsters, gamblers, and international financiers are happy to provide whatever is needed to keep their boys in power. At any moment, they can lay their hands on millions of dollars which can be used to fly from island to island, to buy all the space and time wanted on radio, television and in the newspapers, to print literature, or for any other purpose. With this money, they can bribe voters with gifts, and the poverty of the people makes such bribery very effective.

Once the ruling class has established its politicians in power, they are willing to use that power to crush any opposition. Over 60 percent of the jobs in the country are directly controlled by the government. Civil servants are forbidden to engage in politics at all, but those who speak in support of the government have little to fear. On the other hand, those who oppose the government have often found themselves out of a job and with no prospect of finding another. In a country with such high unemployment and so few jobs available, control over work becomes the most direct and effective form of political control.

Pindling and the PLP have never hesitated to employ economic coercion in the most blatant manner. We have already cited the case of Dr. John McCartney, who was refused even the courtesy of an interview when he applied for the position of Principal of the College of the Bahamas. Former PLP minister, Carlton Francis, also learned the price to be paid for opposing Pindling, when he too was denied employment, and again there was no doubt that his rejection was based on strictly political grounds. And many other political figures have found themselves hounded into obscurity because they dared to utter a word of opposition to Pindling. Most people whose jobs depend on the government have by now been frightened into silence. But every one of them knows that what we say is true.

Even those who do not directly depend on the government for employment are not safe from reprisals. Those who have small businesses may find their credit suddenly cut off and their creditors demanding immediate payment. Those who work for private businesses may also find their jobs threatened. And even those who belong to unions get little protection, since most union leaders are closely tied to the PLP and are themselves cronies of Pindling.

So the ruling class and its politicians have robbed the people of their wealth and then have used that wealth to establish political control and crush any opposition. With such power in their hands, they have been quite willing to keep the parliamentary system. In fact, the appearance of "democracy" provides a perfect cover for their control. Open and direct totalitarianism would probably arouse resistance from many

quarters, whereas totalitarianism with a "democratic" face is much more effective.

Finally, we should mention one other factor that serves to undermine democracy—the political passivity of the people. Through centuries of slavery, colonialism and neocolonialism, the Bahamian people have never been allowed to participate in the political life of their country. They have been almost completely excluded from any role in public affairs, and because of this they have been taught that the masses have no function in politics. As a result, Bahamian workers often see politics as just a game of hustle that has nothing to do with them. As they see it, their only part is to see which politician is willing to pay most for their vote.

Because of this tradition of passivity, the masses exercise little control over politicians or government. Most of the men who sit in the Bahamian House of Assembly are incompetents who couldn't get elected dog-catcher in most countries. When these hustlers vote themselves huge salaries, you would expect public outrage, but what you find is silence. The sort of corruption recently revealed in the Resorts International scandal would have brought down the government in most countries. But in the Bahamas, corruption is a way of life and causes barely a ripple in the political waters. And once a politician is elected, he almost never returns to his constituency and he feels no need to consult the people, until he is ready to buy their vote in the next election.

In any capitalist country, the ruling class will use its wealth to generate political power and to see to it that the state serves ruling-class interests. But in the Bahamas, the passivity of the people allows the ruling class and its politicians to operate with an indifference and contempt for the people that is truly astounding.

What we have been describing is a dictatorship with a democratic face. It is the dictatorship of a certain class—the class of the rich and powerful—carried on behind a parliamentary mask. It is this dictatorship that the Vanguard Party is committed to destroying. And it is against this background that we call for genuine democracy in the Bahamas.

The first step in establishing democracy is to undercut the economic basis of class dictatorship. So long as a few people own and control the wealth and resources of the country, it is futile to speak of democracy. One can invent and devise all sorts of political systems and representative bodies, but it will be of little avail so long as economic power is the monopoly of the ruling class. If a certain class can control jobs, investment, production, and trade, that class will also exercise effective political power. There can be no political justice without economic justice.

It is foolish to speak of political rights apart from economic rights. A person may have the "right" to free speech, but if his or her job depends on saying what the boss wants to hear, then there is no real freedom of speech. It is foolish to talk about freedom of the press if all

newspapers, television, and radio are controlled by the ruling class. And in general, it is senseless to discuss political freedom, so long as the masses are in economic bondage. This is why socialization of the means of production is the first indispensable step.

Once the economic power of the ruling class is broken, once the wealth of the nation is owned and controlled by the people, many steps can be taken to assure a great extension of democracy and popular political control.

An effective system of political education and mass political involvement must be instituted without delay. In every neighborhood and workplace, steps must be taken to assure that the people participate directly in decisions that affect their lives. Through literature, television, radio, and local meetings, the people must be fully informed about the issues and problems that confront the nation. And through direct local government, they must be given the power to decide the course of the nation.

Barriers to political participation, such as the requirement of a deposit for candidacy, must be abolished at once. Strict regulations should govern campaigning to assure that no one gains an advantage simply because of having more money to spend. All candidates must be given exactly the same opportunity to state their case, and every effort must be made to assure that each and every person is fully informed about the issues and candidates. Bribery of any sort should be liable to extremely severe penalties. In other words, an election must cease to be a popularity contest or a contest to see who can buy the most votes and become a serious political process involving all the people of the nation.

Correspondingly, the representatives of the people must become genuine representatives. They must be chosen from among the people themselves and well known at the local level. We must do away with professional politicians and with politics as a profession. The representatives of the people must be *of the people*. They should earn a *workman's wage*, not the exorbitant salaries which today attract the most greedy and unscrupulous men to politics.

Representatives should be required to meet regularly with their constituents and to submit themselves and their records to frequent and scrupulous examination at the hands of the people. And there must be an effective system of referendum and recall, which will enable the people, perhaps by means of a petition signed by one-third of the constituents, to demand a referendum to recall any representative who does not faithfully serve their interests. Only such steps as these can convert the present parliamentary talk-shop into a workshop to carry out the business of the people.

There must also be an effective system of local government. There are many issues that can best be handled at the local level. Local organizations give all the people the opportunity to influence policy directly. And with a viable system of local government, the national government can become a forum for coordinating and implementing

local decisions, instead of being cut off from the daily concerns of the people, as it presently is.

These steps are needed to assure that the will of the people is translated into law and state policy. But by themselves, they are not enough. The popular will must do more than make the law, it must *enforce* the law as well. And this means that the coercive organs of the state must be in the hands of the working class.

The police and army presently controlled by the ruling class must be replaced by armed forces controlled by the people. The masses must have at their disposal organs for defence against both foreign enemies and criminal elements within the society. Not merely thieves and murderers, but those who seek to take the wealth of the nation and re-establish a system of privilege and riches for a few must know that their crimes will be met by the power of the workers' state. In this way, the police power which is today an instrument for oppressing the masses can become a weapon of the people.

By the same token, the judicial system must be closely controlled by the people. A system of justice is needed which makes it impossible for wealth to buy immunity. Today the jails and prisons are filled mainly with poor and working men and women, while the rich can afford the lawyers and the bribery to remain at liberty. So the poor man who steals a loaf of bread rots in jail, while the rich man who steals millions lives at Lyford Cay.

This system has to be brought to an end. Justice cannot be for sale, and punishment must be fitted to the crime. This can be accomplished only if the present system of professional lawyers and judges is replaced by a system of justice based in popular tribunals.

These are the obvious kinds of changes that will be needed if we are to realize real democracy. Leadership in carrying out the changes must be in the hands of the working class, those whose labour has built the nation. The Vanguard Party fully supports all of these steps to assure that the Bahamian people take command of their society. And we challenge all those misleaders who accuse the Vanguard of "totalitarianism" to renounce their high salaries, to place real economic power in the hands of the people, and to submit themselves and their records to the scrutiny of the people. Let us establish once and for all who really supports a democratic Bahamas.

(5) Education

Point 7. WE BELIEVE in *mass education* of all levels in a Bahamian context, by which we mean that our country can develop its human and natural resources to the fullest and instill a spirit of patriotism into our people only if Bahamian citizens have the right to education at all levels and of all types. Until such an educational system is devised, talk of nationalism is meaningless.

Point 8. WE BELIEVE that an educational system that will prepare the citizens to cope with everyday problems should have the following characteristics:

- (a) a system of vocational training
- (b) a stress on academics but an even greater stress on learning by doing. We cannot neglect the academics; however, let us bear in mind that learning by doing is one of the greatest ways of releasing the creative energies of our people
- (c) the encouragement of mobility of labour and self help.

A modern society without a first-rate system of mass education is like a car without an engine. And the Bahamas remains today a country with a poor educational system that is rapidly deteriorating even further.

It is true that the PLP has made some improvements on the old UBP educational policy. A number of primary schools have been built, and a fairly high percentage of the national budget is set aside for education. But despite the crowing of the PLP over its "commitment to education," the fact remains that the present educational system functions very poorly and does little to meet the basic needs of the nation.

The problems of the schools are many and various. To begin with, the failure to tax the wealthy means that revenues available are totally inadequate for any purpose. It does little good to set aside a sizeable percentage of the budget for schools, so long as the total budget is so small as to make the *amount* of money available far less than needed. Thus we are still left with terribly overcrowded classrooms, a critical shortage of books and materials, a shortage of qualified teachers, and few special programs for individual students. As a result, many students leave the schools lacking not only many skills, but even basic literacy skills.

The government may claim that the literacy rate is over 90 percent, but we all know that such a figure can be justified only by adopting a very limited definition of literacy. Perhaps most Bahamians can write their names, but when it comes to the kinds of reading and writing skills needed to function in a modern society, many thousands are in fact functionally illiterate, despite spending years in the schools. And as the population continues to grow and revenues remain small, the situation becomes more hopeless every year.

What has been said about primary and secondary schools applies to higher education as well. The College of the Bahamas, our only institution of "higher" education, is really no more than an inadequate vocational school. It is so poorly equipped and offers so little that it is inappropriate to refer to it as a college at all.

But lack of funding is only one problem of the present educational system, and it may not even be the most important. Probably the most fundamental failure of the schools is part of the failure of the present regime in general. That is the failure to develop a plan of national development, in which the role of education could be defined.

In any capitalist country, the educational system will be used by the ruling class to serve its purposes. But even most capitalist countries attempt to build a diversified and independent economy and to train their citizens to function effectively in all sectors of such an economy. However, in the Bahamas, there has not been even this level of planning. PLP politicians and the ruling class they serve have been concerned only to grab as much as they can as quickly as they can. There has been no serious attempt to diversify the economy or to provide for the kind of solid base that can meet future needs. And as a consequence of this neglect, there has been no attempt to build an educational system that will equip our people to function in a modern society.

Under the present system, there is virtually no education for scientific farming or fishing, so that none of our people have the skills to develop these vital sectors of the economy. Technical skills that would equip people to function in a technological society are hard to acquire. Scientists, engineers, and technicians not only cannot be produced by the system, but there would be little place for them in the present parasitic and service-oriented economy.

However, the failure to provide vocational and technical training does not mean that an emphasis is being placed on the humanities or other academic subjects. Our people are also taught almost nothing about world history, economics, politics, or culture. Current events and the developments in the Caribbean or in the rest of the world are seldom taught. A few people may learn to be bank tellers, clerks or secretaries, but there is no attempt to provide any genuine academic education that would deepen understanding of the world. And of course, the reason for this is no mystery, since the present regime can ill afford an educated people who are aware of their exploitation or of the alternatives open to them.

The development of a democratic and socialist Bahamas will thus require a total reorganization of education as a priority of the highest order. Once the economy of the country is brought under popular control, it will be possible to develop a balanced educational system as an aspect of overall national planning. And once the wealth of the country is under popular control, there will be resources adequate to support a first-rate system of education.

It goes without saying that there must be more schools, better schools, more and better teachers, the best equipment for all students and teachers, and an adequate supply of books and other materials. But these things, as essential as they are, are not enough. To combat centuries of colonialism and PLP neocolonialism, there will have to be an upgrading of the quality of education in the schools, coupled with an extension of education into all sectors of the society.

Vocational and technical training will have to be expanded greatly to equip people for the jobs demanded by a balanced and independent economy. A great expansion of classroom activity will certainly be a part of this; but equally important is the creation of a system of on-the-

job training, where people can acquire needed skills in the most practical and efficient way. Even younger students must be introduced to the practical activities of fishing, farming, technology, etc., so that they learn the dignity of work and the creative possibilities of productive enterprise. And students should become directly acquainted with a wide range of practical activities, so that they will better understand the total functioning of society and be able to play a more intelligent role in its direction. The goal will be to develop skills, while avoiding narrow specialization and educating an informed person. Such a person will be able to employ his or her skills in the most creative way and to make a significant contribution to the planning and direction of the entire life of society.

Certainly one pressing need is for a basic education in politics and history. All our young people need to acquire a basic understanding of world history, economic systems, and political developments. This should include a special emphasis on what is now completely excluded. Our people need to know about the development of colonialism and imperialism in the modern world, and they need to understand the underdevelopment of the Third World as a necessary feature of modern imperialism. The Caribbean region requires special study, both in order to understand our own Bahamian development better and in order to build a sense of regional unity that can lead to fuller cooperation among Caribbean nations. This kind of historical and political education is essential, since in a socialist Bahamas the people will cease to be the passive victims of oppression and will become the conscious agents of national development.

Perhaps most important, education must no longer be conceived of as just a matter of the schools. It must reach into every corner of Bahamian life. As young people acquire basic skills, they should be given an opportunity to go into the community and teach those who have been deprived of those skills by the present system. And as they teach older people, they will also learn from them the wisdom, culture and practical knowledge gained from a lifetime of labour and class struggle.

In every community and neighborhood on every island, there should be constant educational activity. The people should be kept abreast of current events in the nation and the world. There should be opportunities at the local level to update and improve old skills and develop new ones. Learning should be integrated into the workplace, so that workers are given paid time to study and expand knowledge. And as new skills and interests are developed, a rational socialist society will be able to assist each person to find the area in which his or her skills can be most effectively utilized, while also maximizing the opportunity of self-fulfillment of each member of society.

Once such an educational system becomes a part of Bahamian life, we will indeed see the birth of a new Bahamian. There will be a deepening of patriotic feeling, as our people learn of their history, their struggles, and their place in the world. There will be a new confidence as peo-

ple realize that their skills are essential to national development and as they are able to take control of their own nation. There will be a deeper sense of community as people work and learn together and as each sees the part played by his or her contribution to the total well-being of society.

Education is an accurate mirror of society. Today a stagnant, non-functional and backward educational system reflects a political and economic system which is irrational, exploitative, and without direction. In a socialist Bahamas, an educational system that is dynamic, diversified and enlightened will reflect a society in which the people have assumed rational control and are making intelligent use of resources to build a humane and democratic future for themselves and their children.

(6) Culture

Point 9. WE BELIEVE in a *culture* that recognizes and promotes the experience of all groups in society, by which we mean that in the past in our country, one set of cultural experiences, the Western European, has been the criterion by which all other experiences have been judged, eventuating in a feeling of self hate. We feel that such a condition has stifled the development of our people, and it is only by encouraging a cultural pluralism that our creative energies can be released.

The word "culture" is often associated with the artistic achievements of a people, with their music, art, dance, literature, etc. Or it may be extended to costumes, folk tales, folkways, and customs of marriage, burial, etc. In capitalist society, there is always an attempt to separate the culture so defined from other aspects of life, so that culture is contrasted with politics, economics, and the legal system. But a close look will always reveal that this separation is artificial and illusory. The culture of a people is a *total response* of that people to their reality, it includes every aspect of life, and all aspects are closely interrelated.

In capitalist society, music, art, dance and literature are commodities alongside other commodities, and they are produced for profit, as are all other commodities. The same can be said of sport and of athletic achievement. Everything is for sale. The creative expressions of a people growing out of their daily interaction with each other and with nature are replaced by a slick mass-produced art which is peddled on the market alongside hair spray and mouthwash. The criterion of cultural expression is no longer rooted in the life of the people, but is based on the almighty dollar alone. Many cultural expressions are destroyed altogether by the concentration on profit, and those that remain are torn away from the people and made so expensive that only the ruling class can afford them. Thus what is called "culture" becomes a bastardized and standardized product, cut off from its roots in the lives of the people and available only to the "cultured" ruling class who can afford

the time and money to "appreciate the finer things of life." What remains for the people is "pop culture," a brand of mass-produced music and art with little of enduring life or value.

Besides being a source of profit for the ruling class, cultural expression is also an instrument of ruling-class domination over the masses. By cutting the popular roots of culture and by reducing all culture to ruling-class culture, they gain a powerful weapon. Rather than expressing the hopes, struggles and aspirations of the masses, art, music, and literature become vehicles for promoting the bourgeois values, such as individualism, competition, and the pursuit of cheap thrills. The deep traditions of the people are pushed aside and replaced by formal schools and universities which indoctrinate young people with a bourgeois outlook, while isolating them from their historical roots. And control of all media of communication serves to drown the collective wisdom of the people under a torrent of ruling-class propaganda.

These problems which are severe in any capitalist country are greatly intensified in countries that have been victimized by centuries of colonialism and imperialism. From its beginning, West European and American imperialism has needed to justify its policy of exploiting and oppressing the peoples of the rest of the world. And one way of doing this is by claiming to bring the "blessings" of Western Christian civilization to the "backward" and "uncultured" masses of the world. Thus a deliberate and sustained effort was made to undermine and destroy the indigenous culture of every people and to replace it with Western European culture. Schools were Europeanized, native religions were replaced by European Christianity, and ancient political and economic forms were uprooted and displaced by the political and economic system of the "mother" country. Perhaps worst of all, many of the brightest young people were torn from their cultural context, indoctrinated with the foreign culture and then returned to their homelands to become agents of the foreign culture among their own people. The indigenous culture is thus denigrated and depicted as inferior. Young people are encouraged to reject their own cultural roots, fostering a feeling of self hate and a worship of things European and American.

So we can see that it is wrong to isolate some few aspects of a people's life and heritage and to regard those alone as constituting culture. Whether for better or worse, there is no way of separating art, music, and literature from politics and economics. The culture of a people is, as we said above, a *total* complex of institutions, expressions, ideologies and traditions evolved in the ongoing process of interaction with man and nature. Artistic expression, for example, always serves the political purposes of some class of the society. It may serve the needs and aspirations of the masses, or it may become a tool of domination in the hands of the ruling class or of colonial and imperial interests. Furthermore, if a people can be convinced that its cultural traditions are worthless, then they are cut off from their source and their oppressors' work is made easier.

For centuries the culture of the Bahamian people has been under attack. Our ancestors were torn from their African homelands, with their rich traditions of political and economic development, fine art, and beautiful music and rhythms. They were taught to regard Africa as a wilderness of primitive savages, to whom the Europeans brought the gift of civilization. They were turned into human cattle, subjected to slavery and degradation. More recently, American influence has become pervasive, and today there is no aspect of Bahamian life that is not permeated by foreign tastes, values and ideologies.

Through all these centuries, the Bahamian people have not only survived, but have built stable and enduring forms of community life and cultural expression. They have their own special language and modes of expression, their own music and dance, their own traditions of folklore. They have learned the ways of the sea, the weather and the plant life of their islands. The Bahamian family is a monument to the creative capacities of the human spirit, building a community of love and mutual support in the face of poverty and oppression. And yet all of this is constantly denigrated as worthless, and the dominant culture tries to make us forget our heritage.

The rise of a black government in 1967 and the end of colonialism in 1973 gave hope that the period of foreign domination might be at an end. But the neocolonial Pindling regime is not only the faithful servant of foreign economic interests, it is also filled with slavish imitators of European culture. How many of the lawyers who fill the ministries try to be "more British than the British"? Carefully trained by the institutions of colonialism, they have lost touch with the people. The educational system is a poor imitation of the overly "academic" style of British colonialism, having little connection with the needs of the masses. The cultural traditions of the Bahamian people find little reflection in the institutions of society. And so the people are encouraged to go on worshipping things European and American and thinking little of things Bahamian. Despite some empty talk about "Black Power," the fact remains that the old attitude of self hate is perpetuated in the new neocolonial form.

Because politics, economics, and culture are so intertwined, it is foolish to speak of a cultural revival apart from fundamental political and economic change. It is a healthy sign that some Bahamian youth have renewed interest in Afro-Bahamian culture and in cultural nationalism. It is an indication that these young people are in revolt against the cultural domination of the ruling class and are struggling against the effort to have them despise everything Bahamian.

But "cultural revolution" alone is not sufficient and may even turn into a superficial matter of "style" which can be exploited by the ruling class. Only a thoroughgoing social and political revolution can open the way to creative cultural expression and bring an end to outside cultural domination. It is an illusion to suppose that the Bahamian people can be "culturally liberated" so long as they are under the domination of a

neocolonial clique and their allies, the foreign investors. Even that most basic Bahamian institution, the extended family, cannot survive the dislocations and corrosive effects of an economy that tears us from the land and puts us at the service of gangsters, gamblers and international financiers.

Bahamian culture will be triumphant only when the Bahamian masses are triumphant. Only then will cultural standards be determined by the people. Only then will cultural leadership be drawn from working people, rather than from the ruling class. And only then will the people be able to end the bourgeois use of culture as a tool of indoctrination and manipulation.

The Vanguard Party calls for a deep cultural revival in the Bahamas. We must be willing to learn from other cultures and societies, and many aspects of European and American culture may be useful. But these outside elements must cease to be dominant and must be incorporated into a fundamentally indigenous cultural base.

We call for the creation of a society which will honor the cultural achievements of the people. Today many fine Bahamian artists and athletes can find no place for their talents in Bahamian society, and so they depart for the United States or Europe. In a socialist Bahamas, these creative people will perform a vital role in national life. Art, music, literature and sport will serve the people and have a place of honor.

Only when our people are allowed to develop creatively and to give proud expression to all that is most basic to their everyday lives can we develop the unity, the will, and the class consciousness which are the key to future development.

(7) Internationalism

Point 10. WE BELIEVE in and *support the struggles of oppressed people* throughout the world, especially the people who are struggling against colonialism and imperialism.

The worldwide struggle for liberation from the system of imperialism, colonialism, and neocolonialism is the most dynamic feature of human life on this planet today. The striving of the Bahamian people for economic justice, for national independence and for cultural autonomy cannot be separated from the context of this world struggle. Therefore, the expression of solidarity and support for oppressed people everywhere is not merely a matter of principle, but is necessary for the success of our struggle as well.

If we look at the world today in a broad and objective way, we are impressed by two fundamental realities, one old and one relatively new. The old reality is the system of imperialist domination, which first emerged in the sixteenth century, but which has grown and matured almost up to the present day. Through many changes of strategy and

form, the imperialist system has held to one fundamental goal. Though leadership has shifted from one country to another, the constant purpose has been the enrichment of the ruling classes of the imperialist nations. And the means of achieving this purpose has also remained constant—the exploitation of the people and resources of the underdeveloped countries.

However, alongside the old reality of imperialism, the world today is witnessing the growing strength of a new reality—the struggle of oppressed peoples to throw off the yoke of imperialism and to stand free and strong on their own. We are witnessing an era of mass uprising against oppression which is without parallel in the whole of human history. It is a struggle that has swept up many millions in all parts of the world. This is not a struggle to secure the power of kings or rulers or the barons of capitalist industry. It is a struggle of the people, by the people, and for the interests of the vast majority of the people.

One by one, the exploited, oppressed and imperialized peoples of the world are throwing off the chains of imperialism, of colonialism and neocolonialism. They are bringing an end to foreign domination and fascist tyranny. The roll-call of liberation struggles is already long and grows longer every day—Russia, China, Cuba, Vietnam, Mozambique, Angola, Korea, Zimbabwe, Palestine, Namibia, and so many others far too numerous to list. Here in our own Caribbean area, the anti-imperialist struggle goes forward in Nicaragua, Grenada, St. Lucia, Jamaica, Guyana, and in our own Bahamas, to mention a few.

Oppression breeds resistance, and total oppression breeds total resistance. Imperialism, driven by an unbounded hunger for profit, has sought to bring the whole world under its sway and to subject all the peoples of the world to its control. But the masses so long victimized are realizing the strength that lies in unity and are rising up to reclaim their birthright. The spark of the great October Revolution of 1917 has become a prairie fire which is driving imperialism back upon itself inch by inch. The cost of the struggle has been high. Imperialism has reacted to the aspirations of the masses with unbounded brutality. Setbacks and even defeats have marked the road to liberation. But the tide of change is inexorable, and the will of oppressed people is unbreakable. In 1917, imperialism held unbroken sway over the whole world. Today, a bare two generations later, one-third of mankind lives under socialism, and the struggle goes on. We can now say without hesitation that imperialism, despite its enormous wealth and military destructiveness, is a doomed system. We are witnessing in our time the death of the old order and the birth of a new world of hope and promise for the majority of the world's people.

The struggle of the Bahamian people is part and parcel of this worldwide struggle. Of course, in a real sense, our struggle is our own. No outside power and no other people can win victory for us. We must rely on our own resources, our own determination, our own unity and consciousness. But we can gain strength and inspiration from the

knowledge that we are linked with millions of sisters and brothers around the world in a unity that comes from sharing a common oppression and a common hope for the future.

Solidarity with the exploited peoples of the world is not merely a matter of inspiration—it is a practical political necessity. When we say that imperialism is a doomed system, we by no means imply that it is helpless or weak. On the contrary, it remains the most destructive system in history. And it has again and again demonstrated its willingness to crush ruthlessly any threat to its domination. For this reason alone, it is essential that all oppressed people stand together in common purpose.

Can anyone doubt that imperialism would have moved massively to crush the Cuban revolution, were it not for the unity of Third World opinion that stood behind the Cuban people? In Zimbabwe-Rhodesia, the imperialists are forced to move toward majority rule, and that victory has been won by the people of Zimbabwe, led by the fighters of the Patriotic Front. But there can be no question that the end of the racist regime has been hastened by the support given the struggle by all the people of Africa and the socialist world. The banding together of non-aligned nations is another manifestation of this unity. And further examples could be given.

The Vanguard Nationalist and Socialist Party stands resolutely with the people of the world in the struggle to end imperialism, colonialism and neocolonialism. We recognize this struggle as the only hope for the future of mankind. And we recognize our own struggle in the Bahamas as part of a world-historical movement that is building a new world on the ashes of the old.

The Vanguard Party especially expresses its solidarity with the oppressed peoples of the Caribbean. We feel a special kinship and comradeship with our Caribbean brothers and sisters, because we share a common heritage, a common cultural tradition, and a common history of oppression. We look forward to a day when our peoples can work in close cooperation to pool our talents and our resources in a joint effort to build a better life for all.

The solidarity and unity of all oppressed people must not, however, be won at the expense of the independence of each. No nation, whether capitalist or socialist, has a right to interfere in the affairs of another. And our Bahamian struggle must retain its integrity and independence, even as we extend the hand of comradeship to those who share our purpose. Only such a policy of unity combined with independence can assure an end to all foreign domination and the building of a community of fraternal peoples.

It is in this spirit of comradeship that we take our stand with all oppressed people in the life-and-death struggle to banish from the earth man's exploitation of man.

Notes

¹ *The Nassau Guardian*, April 7, 1978.

² *Vanguard's Election Analysis*, mimeographed.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ Major H. M. Bell, *Bahamas, Isles of June* (London, 1934), p. 74.

⁵ Timothy O. McCartney, "What is the Relevance of Black Power to the Bahamas?" in *Is Massa Day Dead?*, p. 181.

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ Statement published in *The Nassau Guardian*, January 9, 1978.

⁸ Interview in *The Vanguard* newspaper, October, 1977. This is the fortnightly voice of the Vanguard Party.

⁹ This particular statement was in an address delivered at Purdue University, November 7, 1978. For some years, the economic repression of the PLP forced Comrade McCartney and other comrades to seek employment outside the Bahamas. Dr. McCartney was a professor of Political Science at Purdue University. He has now resigned his position to work full-time for the victory of socialism in the Bahamas. However, it is indicative of the irrational tyranny of the Pindling regime that, despite a critical shortage of trained manpower, Dr. McCartney is still denied employment in his homeland.

¹⁰ *Caribbean Contact*, September, 1979.

¹¹ Reported in *World Bank Atlas*, 1977.

CONCLUSION

Every day the Bahamian people are told that their land is a paradise, but they know that they are living in hell. For twelve years, Pindling has promised freedom, but he has delivered corruption, bribery, crime, prostitution, inflation, unemployment, rape, lies, and oppression. He has delivered us into the hands of our enemies. There is a darkness and despair upon the land, because our people are without hope.

The time has come for an end to this era of backwardness and oppression. Our people have suffered too long. Too many promises and too many lies have been visited upon them. We the Bahamian people have laboured to build the land, and now the land must be ours.

The Vanguard Party pledges an end to this regime and a new day of hope and victory for the Bahamian people. The Vanguard Party is the hammer of the working class, and

WE WILL HAMMER IN THE MORNING
WE WILL HAMMER IN THE EVENING
WE WILL HAMMER ALL OVER THIS LAND
UNTIL VICTORY IS WON!

Pindling and the PLP may appear strong at the moment. But if we look deeper, we see that their strength is an illusion. They have no programs to offer the people. They are able to attract only hustlers and self-seekers to their ranks. They are in fact living on memories and borrowed time.

The future of the Bahamas belongs to the people. It belongs to socialism. It belongs to justice, equality, and freedom. The battle has been joined. The struggle may be hard and long. But the outcome is no longer in doubt.

VICTORY TO THE BAHAMIAN PEOPLE!
LONG LIVE THE VANGUARD!
DARE TO STRUGGLE!
DARE TO WIN!

